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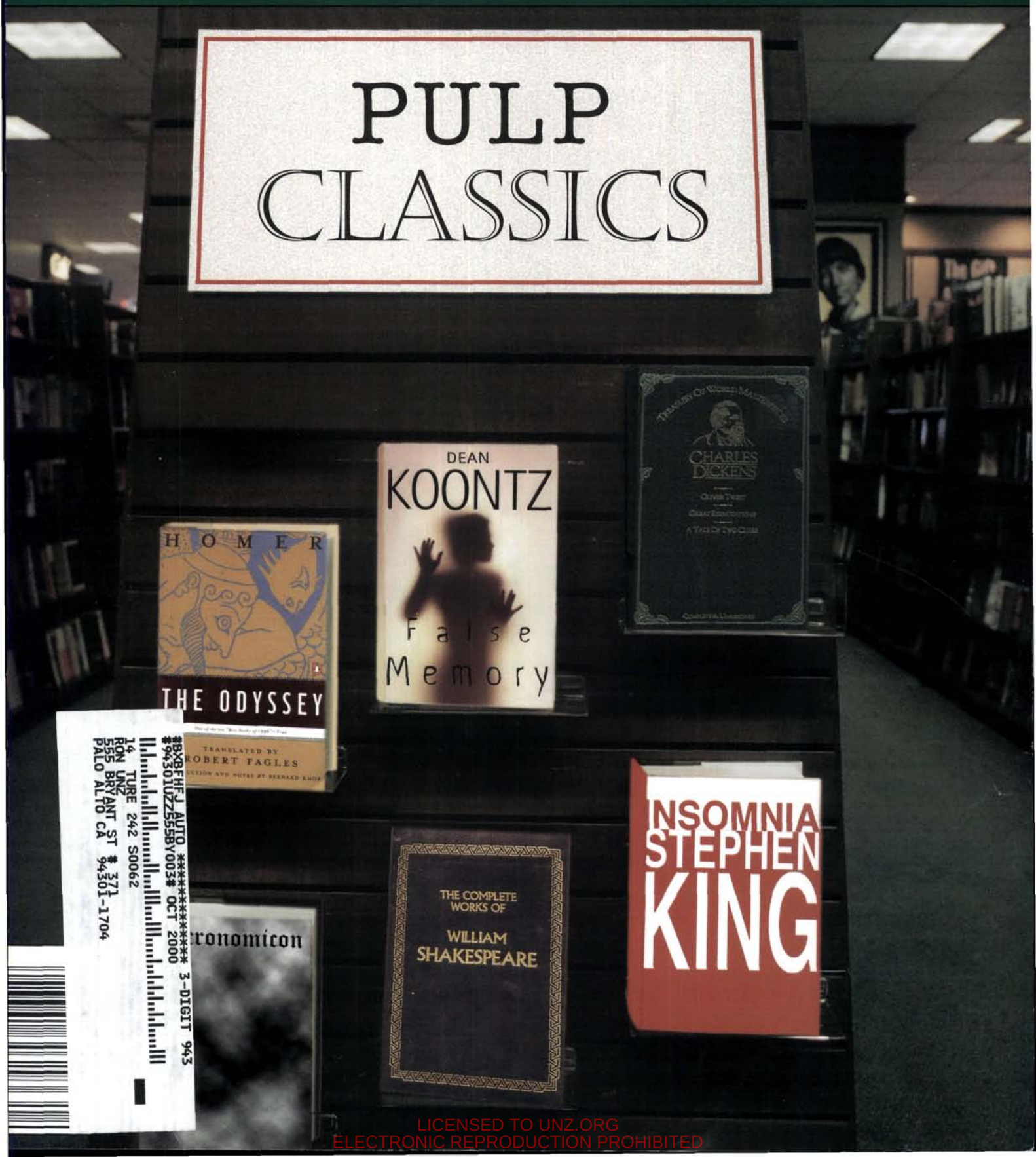

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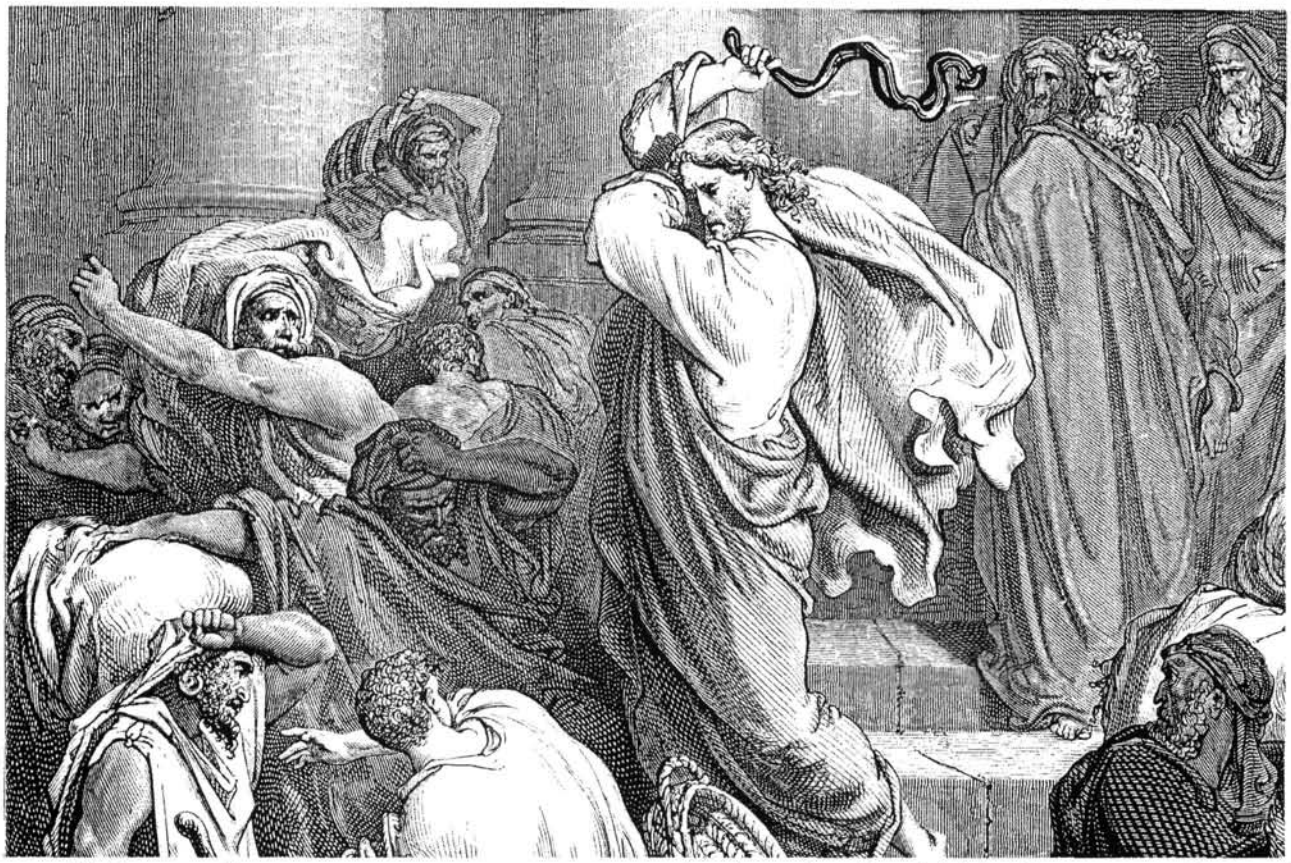
So...You're Intolerant !



Well, so was He.

Jesus more than "offended" the moneychangers; He "intolerantly" threw them out of the Temple. He said "mean-spirited" and "hurtful" things to people — *hypocrites, brood of vipers, sons of Hell*, etc. He was more than "insensitive" to unrepentant sinners; He warned that Heaven would not be "inclusive" of them.

The war between good and evil is not just between the Church and the World; it's being waged inside the churches, where the voices of iniquity have found a booming echo. Those voices speak beguilingly of "tolerance" and "diversity": Premarital sex? "Why, kids can't help it." Abortion? "Women must be free to choose." Homosexuality? "Diverse strokes for diverse folks." Porn? "Lighten up." Adultery? "Be understanding." Assisted suicide? "Be compassionate." Moneychangers in the Temple? "Hey, people need to make a living."

But the forces of libertinism don't just want to be tolerated; they're now demanding and getting approval. If you don't go along with the crowd, *you* won't be tolerated. You will nonjudgmentally be judged to be "intolerant" — and banished to Outer Darkness to wail and gnash your teeth. This is what's happening in many Christian churches today. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, an orthodox Catholic monthly magazine, refuse to throw Christ out of the Temple. If you're willing to stand up for Jesus in the face of accusation — or if you need your backbone stiffened — subscribe today!

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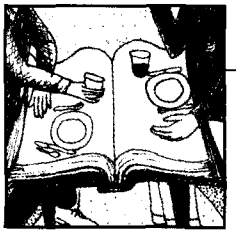

PERSPECTIVE

The Art of Creation 10
by Thomas Fleming

An interview with Dean Koontz.

VIEWS

Storytellers and Fakers by Tony Outhwaite 15
Has anyone read *Infinite Jest?*

Literary Worth and Popular Taste by Clay Reynolds 18
Taking Proust to the beach.

OPINIONS

The Trybe of Yvor 24
by R.S. Gwynn

Yvor Winters: *The Selected Poems of Yvor Winters*

J.V. Cunningham: *The Poems of J.V. Cunningham*

Edgar Bowers: *Collected Poems*

Turner Cassity: *The Destructive Element: New and Selected Poems*

One man's legacy.

Freud With Teeth 27
by Andrei Navrozov

Thomas Harris: *Hannibal*

The coming totalitarianism.

REVIEWS

James E. Person, Jr.'s *Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind* represents a signal contribution to Kirk scholarship, according to **W. Wesley McDonald** ◆ *Perfect Sowing: Reflections of a Bookman* is an enduring testimony to Henry Regnery's achievement, writes **John Attarian** ◆ **Bill Croke** recommends Richard S. Wheeler's *Flint's Honor* ◆ 29

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From the Pacific Northwest: Slaughter on the High Seas 34
by Jonathan Ellis

Letter From Venice: The Lagoon and the Abyss 36
by Andrei Navrozov

Letter From Arizona: On the Border 38
by Tod Newman

Letter From Virginia: The Old Dominion Meets Sploge 38
by Marshall Fishwick

VITAL SIGNS

LITERATURE: The Golden Goose: A Recollection 40
by Robert Beum

HISTORY: Lies, Damned Lies, and Fossils 43
by Philip Jenkins

PHILOSOPHY: The Anti-Philosophy of Richard Rorty 45
by Paul R. Scholle

EDUCATION: Public Schools: The Medium Is the Message 46
by William H. Peterson

FILM: *Wake Island, Go Tell the Spartans, Saigon: Year of the Cat* 48
by Clyde Wilson

DEPARTMENTS

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 4

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS 6

SIGNS OF THE TIMES 22

PRINCIPALITIES & POWERS 32
The Hispanic Strategy
by Samuel Francis

THE HUNDREDTH MERIDIAN 49
Having It All
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

POETRY
Tipu's Tiger and 20
From the Valley of Saying 28
by Paul Lake

ON THE COVER

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APRIL 2000/3

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On the Council of Conservative Citizens

Clyde Wilson is simply wrong when he writes that "the Council of Conservative Citizens was not responsible for saving our flag" and that the Council's "efforts, including rallies by tattooed motorcycle thugs and David Duke followers, have been resoundingly counterproductive—just what the media wanted" ("Letter From South Carolina," *Correspondence*, January).

In the first place, the political controversy involving the Confederate flag that flies over the South Carolina state capitol began in 1994, when grassroots support for keeping the flag was mobilized by the CofCC's South Carolina chapter and its chairman, Dr. Bill Carter. The CofCC was the only organized group in the state involved in defending the flag at a time when most observers believed it would be removed from the capitol. It wasn't—almost entirely because of the efforts of the Council and Dr. Carter.

Since that time, other Southern heritage groups have become involved in defending the flag, though the CofCC continues to play a leading role in its defense. In 1996, we sponsored a mass rally that displayed the world's largest Confederate flag and attracted both wide popular support and major media attention. Last October, the Council organized another mass rally at the capitol that attracted some 500 flag supporters. David Duke did speak to an audience after our rally was finished, and presumably many of his followers were also in our audience. But Mr. Duke is not a member of the Council and did not speak at the CofCC rally.

As for "tattooed motorcycle thugs," some may have been present at one or more CofCC rallies for the flag, but Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* and no friend of the Council, is far more accurate in her characterization of Council membership in a February 14, 1999, column in her newspaper. The CofCC, she writes, "is made up of upstanding, upright, churchgoing folk—doctors, dentists, lawyers, businessmen. And its members—some Republicans, some Democrats—have claimed important political positions. Across the South, especially in Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina, its members are state legislators, city council members, state officials." Miss Tucker is entirely accurate in this description of CofCC membership and achievements.

It is unfortunate that Professor Wilson's ill-informed remarks not only reflect the media bias against the CofCC and similar conservative, pro-flag groups but also contribute to the divisiveness that has harmed the campaign to preserve the Confederate flag in the places of honor in which it belongs.

—Gordon Lee Baum
Chief Executive Officer
Council of Conservative Citizens
St. Louis, MO

I have subscribed to your fine magazine for several years now and have read many interesting and informative articles by Clyde Wilson. I was shocked, however, by some of Dr. Wilson's disparaging comments about the South Carolina Council of Conservative Citizens. His reference to Council members as "tattooed motorcycle thugs and David Duke followers" was most unkind.

Mr. Duke is a controversial figure in the Council, with both his admirers and detractors, but to characterize all Duke supporters as somehow disreputable is patently unfair. As a member of the Council of Conservative Citizens (and, I might add an avid motorcyclist), I have had the pleasure of meeting many members of the South Carolina chapter, none of whom I would describe as a thug.

Clyde Wilson seems to be of the opinion that political victory in the flag debate can be won solely by a coalition of aristocrats and academics, the same groups that largely ran from the battlefield during the desegregation battles of the 50's and 60's, leaving middle- and working-class white Southerners in the lurch.

The Council of Conservative Citizens has a role to play in the defense of symbols of Southern heritage. Dr. Wilson should put aside his snobbishness and work with the Council, not against it.

—Kenneth J. Schmidt
Upper Montclair, NJ

Dr. Wilson Replies:

My reference to the CofCC was made in

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the light of the blanket assertion, repeatedly disseminated by the leaders of the CofCC, that they were responsible for the victory in South Carolina. It is true the CofCC mounted a petition campaign which was useful and held rallies which, as I observed them, were as I described them. This very conveniently allowed the media to play the question as one of civil rights versus bigotry, when the actual contest is between Big Business and the people. The South Carolina legislature has the power in this case, and it is too much to claim that the legislature has acted at the bidding of the CofCC. Rather, our flag is still flying because of the strength of tradition and character that still characterizes our people, as I pointed out in my article.

I plead guilty, to my shame, to being an academic. I am too old to change now. I have never claimed aristocracy. I agree that the academics and aristocrats of the South have largely abandoned us plain folk, though I see some signs that this may be changing. But even if we had had our academics and aristocrats with us during the period of history to which Mr. Schmidt refers, it would have counted nothing against the frenzy of aroused Yankee self-righteousness and absentee moralism backed by federal bayonets that marked those times.

I used to know some Schmidts when I was younger. They lived on Deep Creek just this side of Browns Summit. There were some pretty girls in the family. They were some kind of Baptists, but the children all married Presbyterians. I never heard of any moving to New Jersey. But I appreciate Mr. Schmidt standing up for us Southern plain folk. He might be more useful, however, if he resigned from the CofCC and joined a group that is really concerned with preserving the South—an organization that is concerned with the real and living Dixieland, not, like the CofCC, with some "conservative white American majority" that exists only in the imagination of its leaders.

On Pat Buchanan

Scott P. Richert's endorsement of Pat Buchanan's candidacy (*Cultural Revolutions*, January) is misplaced. At one time, Buchanan was a figure who could, thankfully, separate the "Old Right" from the "neoconservatives." Now, Buchanan is the candidate who will further divide the "Old Right" into two camps, "paleoconservative" and "paleolibertarian." If you think that this has already happened, think again. While both camps clearly differ on trade and economic issues, they agree that the real enemy is the Jacobin central state. Not Pat, who has downplayed any discussion of seriously curbing Leviathan. How can he discuss this issue, with his call for tariffs, his attacks on Corporate America, and his carrying of the "union card"? While corporations should be roundly criticized for many policies, none has carried out a crime like Waco and then put the victims on trial. Pat is a man of passion and commitment, but he wears the blinders of a man who lived his entire life within the Beltway and has only a comic book view of industry and how a business operates.

—Fred Birnbaum
Charlotte, NC

Mr. Richert Replies:

In my piece, I argued that a vigorous and viable Buchanan campaign could refocus public debate on the "questions that must be addressed if our nation is to survive: preserving national sovereignty, renouncing our foreign adventurism, limiting immigration, protecting what's left of our industrial base, returning power to states and local communities, curtailing the tyranny of the federal government, restoring the Constitution of the Framers." That, it seems to me, is reason enough to cheer Pat on. I would hope that most paleolibertarians would welcome a frank debate on these issues and would even agree with Pat's position on all of them—with the exception, of course, of protecting our industrial base. Surely Mr. Birnbaum wouldn't want to forego a national discussion of these issues just to avoid the risk of further dividing paleoconservatives and paleolibertarians.

It's simply inaccurate to say that Pat has "downplayed any discussion of seriously curbing Leviathan." (Compared to whom? George Bush? John McCain? Al Gore? Bill Bradley?) The central theme of Pat's latest book, *A Republic, Not an Empire*, is the dismantling of what Murray Rothbard liked to call the "welfare-warfare state." The trouble, from Mr. Birnbaum's vantage point, is that Pat—like most paleoconservatives—believes that the "real enemy" is not simply the "Jacobin central state," but Jacobin centralism in general. Pat's "attacks on Corporate America" are not directed at "Main Street" American companies, but at highly centralized, globalist, multinational corporations which take advantage of American laws (passed by a Congress purchased with their lobbying dollars) to increase their profits at the expense of American workers—and even, in some cases, of American national security. The libertarian dream, in which the nation-state withers away and is replaced by Microsoft or Wal-Mart, strikes me (and, I suspect, most paleoconservatives) as a nightmare.

On Hawaiian Independence

Gene Healy's *Cultural Revolutions* on American imperialism in Hawaii (December 1999), while doing full justice to President Cleveland's principled anti-imperialism, is not altogether fair to all the American sugar producers in Hawaii. The smaller sugar producers, along with the small businessmen of Honolulu, did indeed launch the 1893 rebellion against the queen, but the largest of the sugar producers, the German immigrant Spreckels (the chief "robber baron" of the mainland sugar industry), remained a firm backer of the deposed monarchy and of Cleveland's refusal to accept Hawaii as a colony.

This robber baron (whom I suppose we would now call a leader of the global capitalist New World Order) had made a deal with the monarchy that gave him clear title to the islands' best sugar land, which he then proceeded to irrigate extensively, much to the consternation of the community of smaller American sugar cane planters and their suppliers in the local business community, who could not match Spreckels' much lower costs.

The moral of the story? Apparently, communitarian movements can sometimes be imperialistic, and soulless international capitalists can oppose imperialism. Even toadies of British imperialism in Europe like J.P. Morgan opposed empire in Asia based on their well-grounded judgment that Asian empires would be unprofitable.

—Edward H. Kaplan
Bellingham, WA

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ELIAN GONZALEZ, the six-year-old Cuban boy whose mother died in an illegal attempt to enter the United States, has become the smiley-face of the New World Order. Not that Elian or his father or Fidel Castro (or, to go still lower, the Clinton administration) is to blame—far from it. This mischief is being made by conservative Republican politicians and family-values Christians.

The custody battle between Elian's father and his mother's family living in Florida is not about Cuba or communism, but it has everything to do with the destructive do-gooding forces that are never far beneath the surface of the American character.

This is not the complex case that cynical politicians and dishonest journalists would have you believe. It is a clear-cut case of right and wrong. By Cuban law, by Florida law, by the laws of all 50 states, and according to international agreements signed by the United States, Elian Gonzalez belongs to his next-of-kin, his father. No one else has standing in the case. No one. Not the INS, not his maternal uncle in Florida, not Senators Connie Mack and Jesse Helms, not Congressman Dan Burton. No one.

Cuban exiles and their conservative friends insist that Cuba is a living hell—an island "gulag"—that justifies any violation of law and common sense. Yes, Castro is an ugly thug, a communist who has ruined his country, but recent visitors to Cuba have not returned with stories of massive oppression and executions. Ordinary people who stay out of politics—which is most people in most places most of the time—run into few problems with the government. They are free to work hard and live on the margin.

Elian will probably not grow up to be a K-Mart shopper in Cuba, and he will not be able to afford designer jeans and Air Jordan sneakers. In fact, there is real want in Cuba, sometimes approaching famine. But the lack of food and medicine is not entirely the fault of the communist government. The American-imposed embargo on the island—an embargo that is immoral and illegal—keeps the Cuban economy on the ropes. You can't have it both ways, arguing in favor of an embargo and then complaining that the Cubans are poor.

The other "arguments" in favor of keeping Elian in the United States are equally ludicrous. "How do we know he won't face political reprisals?" I've been asked, and "How do we know his father is free to speak?" We don't know in any custody battle if one or another claimant has been blackmailed or bullied, and any American who thinks the press is free in USA-land ought to pick up a copy of *Time* or subscribe to a Gannett paper. In this case, however, there is simply no evidence; even if there were, it would not alter the simple fact that no U.S. government agency has jurisdiction.

"But," I have been told by conservative Christians, "a communist country is not a healthy place to grow up in." Probably not, but how much pornography is on Cuban TV? That is virtually all there is to American pop culture. I don't know what the abortion rate in Cuba is (or even if such a figure is available), but it is hard to believe it begins to approach the American level. In fact, one of the glories of American democracy is that we give our mothers the freedom to kill their babies with impunity, and—"ironically"—one of the first steps taken by post-communist countries like Rumania is to imitate the West by legalizing abortion. If Elian is forced to remain in the United States, he will live in Miami—one of the most violent and decadent parts of this violent and decadent nation. If the child's safety is all that we are worried about, send him back. Besides—and this cannot be said too often—we the people and we the government have no standing, morally or legally.

Even Doris Meissner, the INS director, finally realized the truth in deciding not to put any obstacles in the way of Elian's repatriation. The crude fact is that, by American law, the boy is simply an illegal alien who can either be returned to Cuba or stuck in a concentration camp.

The case is simple, but in an amazing act of judicial arrogance, Miami-Dade County Circuit Court Judge Rosa Rodriguez issued an order delaying Elian's repatriation on the grounds that he would face "imminent and irreparable harm." She would have better grounds for ruling that the people of East Timor or Rwanda face irreparable harm if they are not all immediately transported to the United States. This amazing decision was only made intelligible on January 12, when it was revealed that the spokesman for Elian's Florida relatives had worked as a paid consultant for Judge Rodriguez.

Money and ethnic ties—comparatively honorable motives—may explain Judge Rodriguez's judicial activism. What explains Congressman Dan Burton's decision to hold hearings, subpoena little Elian, and delay his return home? Or Jesse Helms' offer to make Elian's father a citizen? These two Solons, in passing the Helms-Burton act, have done almost as much to make Cubans miserable as their communist dictator. If they want to help Elian, they should end the embargo.

But neither Dan Burton nor Jesse Helms has the slightest interest in what happens to any Cuban, apart from the Cuban-Americans who give heavily to the Republican Party. At the same time they were trying to ruin the life of one Cuban family, GOP leaders were meeting in San Jose to concoct an Hispanic-based electoral strategy.

Dick Armey apparently thinks that, by offering up to $3,000 of free medical care, he and his colleagues can woo Hispanic voters. The Republicans even held focus groups with non-citizens, who apparently had a hard time understanding the plan. What poor minorities do understand very well is the fact that the Democrats will always up the ante, and when the legals and illegals vote, they are going to vote for Al Gore. Except, of course, for the Cubans, who are loyal to the party of the Cold War.

The Republican right lost its reason for living when the Berlin Wall came down, and by whipping up opposition to Castro, they hope that a little Reagan-dust will fall on their candidates. They are wrong. GOP intervention in a simple child-custody battle once again reveals the hollowness of their anti-government/pro-family rhetoric. Who would have believed that "conservatives," of all people, would be defending the federal government's right to take a child away from his father? The answer is simple: anyone who had looked at their voting records instead of listening to their speeches.

But this is more than a government versus the family issue. It is, as the dictator Castro has termed it, a case of Yanqui imperial arrogance. There is no spot on earth, no private business, no intimate relationship, that Americans are unwilling to interfere in.

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This puritanical busybodying is the besetting American sin. Our own families are plagued by divorce and child abuse, but we think we have the right to settle custody cases for the Cubans. Our streets are nightmares of ethnic violence, but we are willing to bomb European cities in order to prevent wars between Christians and Muslims. And then we wonder why the world hates us.

—*Thomas Fleming*

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT, late in January, dodged a bullet by refusing to decide whether Maryland's decision to close its public schools on Good Friday violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. State and local Good Friday closing laws have been with us for many generations, but recently they have been challenged in the federal courts. It was only early in this century that the Supreme Court declared that the First Amendment's restrictions on religion apply to the states; after all, the text of the First Amendment only prohibits action by Congress, and there were three established churches and religious restrictions on the franchise and holding public office in 11 of the 13 original states at the time the First Amendment was adopted.

For most of our history, it was not uncommon even for federal judges (including those on the Supreme Court) to state that the United States was a "Christian nation." Madison, writing in the *Federalist*, implied that Americans' shared possession of Christianity was one of the factors working in favor of sound republican government, and Tocqueville, trying to explain why democracy worked in America, pointed to Christianity as one answer. Indeed, the Founders believed that there could be no order without law, no law without morality, and no morality without religion. They had no difficulty with the official promotion of Christianity, though they believed that the federal government should not embrace any particular sect.

The worry among many civil liberties organizations, however, is that any overt endorsement of Christianity by government will lead to political or perhaps psychological damage. Thus, in the Maryland Good Friday closing case, the Jewish teacher who challenged the holiday argued that the state's practice "sends a message of inclusion to Christian schoolchildren and a message of exclusion to their Jewish, Muslim, and nonbelieving classmates." Talmudic distinctions are called for here, as the actions of the American Jewish Congress seem to suggest. With commendable *chutzpah*, the AJC supports closing schools on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, on the theory that the absence of many pupils and teachers on those days could make conducting class difficult or expensive. But it opposes Good Friday closings or Easter vacations because of its belief that "The establishment clause ensures that ours is not a Christian nation; rather, it is a pluralistic one, comprised of peoples of myriad faiths, beliefs and views."

It is apparently the labeling of the spring holidays as "Good Friday" or "Easter" vacations, without invoking evidence of a secular justification, that bothers the AJC. Picking up the cue, Maryland, Indiana, and other jurisdictions that have successfully defended Good Friday closings have begun to argue that the holidays have a secular purpose: avoiding costs of absenteeism, or providing a spring holiday during the long stretch bounded by Martin Luther King, Jr., Day and Presidents Day on one end and summer vacation on the other.

The federal courts of appeals appear to be buying that argument, applying the aptly named "Lemon test," mentioned in my *Cultural Revolutions* last month. This test is maddeningly difficult to apply. For instance, it forbids official displays of freestanding crèches or menorahs, but permits these seasonal symbols if they are combined with non-religious items such as Santa, his elves, and reindeer. (This is known in the trade as the "three plastic animals" rule.)

In letting the federal appeals court decision in the Maryland Good Friday closing case stand, the Supreme Court may have decided that, in an age when a President can seek to avoid the commission of perjury by ruminating on what the meaning of the word "is" is, it is permissible to allow religious holidays when the fig leaf of a secular purpose can be modestly placed upon them. If the Court decides not to rule on the issue, this will become the accepted practice. This doesn't exactly encourage respect for the rule of law, but it might help avoid excessive entanglement of the federal courts with the exercise of popular sovereignty by state and local governments. The Supreme Court has, at this writing, not yet indicated whether it will take on the Indiana "Good Friday" closing case, which is also before it, but my bet is that it will not.

This spring, the Court is already obligated to determine whether the federal "Violence Against Women Act" is constitutional (it should not be, but the Court will ignite a firestorm if it so decides); it will likely pronounce on the constitutionality of school vouchers (too close to call); it will rule on the permissibility of compulsory student fees to finance partisan political activities (should be a no-no); and it may even overturn the requirement of the Miranda warning (don't bet on it). This will be one of the most important Supreme Court terms in years, and it should set the stage for a battle between the presidential candidates over the Court's role in national life. At this point, the Supremes don't need the Good Friday dispute, and they would do best to avoid it.

—*Stephen B. Presser*

THE RUSSIAN ARMY began its big push to take the Chechen capital, Grozny, on the day after Christmas, directing artillery and air power at concentrations of Chechen fighters near the center of "Dzhokhar." (The rebels have renamed the city in honor of the first president of independent "Ichkeriya," Dzhokhar Dudayev.) Thousands of civilians remain, cowering in the dank cellars of Dzhokhar/Grozny, either frightened by reports that the Russians are strafing refugee columns along the "secure corridor" leading south or intimidated by the Islamist warlords, who may calculate, as the Great Teacher of the Peoples himself did during the horrific siege of Stalingrad, that the troops will defend a live city better than a dead one.

By mid-January, however, Moscow could no longer pretend that all was going according to plan (assuming there is one). Army General Mikhail Malofeyev, deputy commander of the Russian forces in northern Grozny, was shot through the head by a Chechen sniper, his forward HQ contingent all but wiped out by Chechen rocket-propelled grenades during a firefight in his sector. Following Malofeyev's embarrassing death, Moscow began a shake-up of the military command structure, and official sources, after claiming fantastically low casualty rates for months, admitted losses of around 1,200 men in the North Caucasus since last fall. (Those figures are probably still low.) Moscow now appears to be planning to declare victory (assuming Grozny eventually falls) and get out,

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the war having served its purpose by boosting Acting President Vladimir Putin's popularity.

As of this writing, Putin's poll numbers remain high, and he will likely win the early election scheduled for March 26 (although Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov has reportedly called on his "field commanders" to redouble their efforts in order to hurt Putin's campaign; some reports claim the Chechens will hang on in Grozny until after February 23, the date Stalin deported the entire Chechen nation during World War II, then melt into the hills to fight a guerrilla campaign). Putin's endorsement secured victory for the Kremlin-backed Unity movement in December's parliamentary elections. Unity garnered over 23 percent of the vote, finishing just behind the pathetic "opposition" Communists (CPRF), now totally intimidated by Putin's support in the "power ministries." The Kremlin has the votes to block any moves by either the CPRF or the anti-Kremlin Fatherland-All Russia faction, headed by Yevgeni Primakov.

The West has given its halfhearted endorsement to the election results, calling Unity's performance a victory for "reform" (whatever that might be), but the real story is the West's bizarre belief that the campaign in Chechnya, the increasingly anti-Western rhetoric of Putin, and the general mood of belligerence in the Land of the Firebird are merely the products of a few xenophobic "elements" in the military and security organs or, alternatively, that the Kremlin manufactured Russia's surly nationalistic mood to boost Putin prior to Yeltsin's New Year's Eve resignation. Meanwhile, the Council of Europe and the European Union are threatening sanctions against Russia over the Chechnya operation as professional Russophobes call for a renewal of the Cold War. Strobe Talbott and company are as clueless as ever, finding the sharpening worldwide resistance to globalism as incomprehensible as the modest aspirations of people who did not attend Harvard or Yale.

The truth is that something like the present Russian distrust of the West would have come about regardless of who was at the helm in the Kremlin, that Putin had long been associated with the "Westernizers" in Yeltsin's entourage, that both "democrats" and "patriots" have come to distrust—if not hate—the West equally, and that most Russians now appear to believe that the West is merely looking for an excuse to continue the dismemberment of the Russian state. The 21st century will likely be a tale of the West's continuing clash with those who do not see the surrender of their identity as a fair price for joining the Club of Smug and Soulless States.

—Denis Petrov

EPICYCLES:

• The Battle of Richmond Continues: Lynn Hopewell, our correspondent from Virginia who has been reporting on the controversy surrounding a picture of **Robert E. Lee** (see "Letter From Virginia: The Battle of Richmond," February, and *Cultural Revolutions*, March), has provided the following update: "On January 18, a Virginia holiday honoring Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the banner honoring Lee was firebombed. The police have no suspects. The Sons of Confederate Veterans has called the act a 'hate crime.' FBI agent John Donahue, who investigates hate crimes for the bureau's Richmond office, says that 'Southerners' are not regarded as a protected class under federal hate-crime laws. The sponsors of the gallery of historic banners have not decided whether to replace the picture of Lee.

"Earlier in the month, vandals painted 'Kill the white devil' and drew a pentagram on the historic statue of Lee on Richmond's famous Monument Avenue. The Capital Police are investigating this incident as a hate crime because 'the language is designed to institute hatred from one ethnic group to another.'"

OBITER DICTA: Our longtime publications director, **Guy C. Reffett**, has left The Rockford Institute to pursue the American Dream: starting his own business. We wish him all the best in his new endeavor.

Mr. Reffett's former duties have been assumed by our managing editor, **Scott P. Richert**, who, with this issue, has been elevated to the position of executive editor. In addition to his editorial duties, Mr. Richert will now oversee the business aspects of *Chronicles*, including printing, circulation, and advertising. He will be assisted in these duties by our talented and indispensable circulation manager, **Cindy Link**.

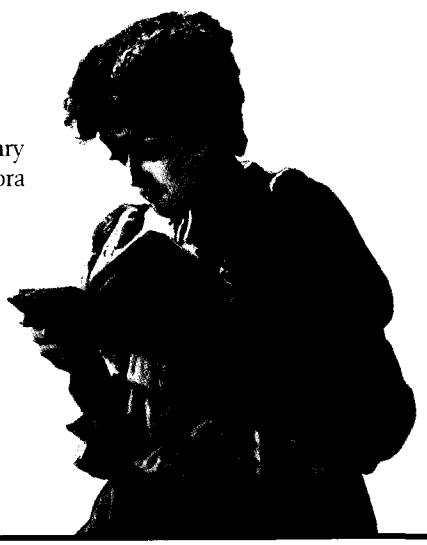
Chronicles is hiring an assistant editor. Experience with Microsoft Word and desktop publishing on the Macintosh is a plus. For consideration, please send a résumé, writing samples, and salary requirements to: *Chronicles*, 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.

Paul Lake, who teaches English and creative writing at Arkansas Tech, has contributed two poems to this issue. His second collection of poetry, *Walking Backward*, was recently released by Story Line Press. Mr. Lake's poems have appeared in the *Formalist*, the *Hudson Review*, the *Sewanee Review*, and the *Paris Review*, among others.

Our art this month is provided by our art director, **H. Ward Sterett** of Roscoe, Illinois. Mr. Sterett received his B.F.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.F.A. from Northern Illinois University, and attended the L'Abri Fellowship, where he studied the effect of Christianity on art. He currently works as a sculptor, painter, and printmaker in Roscoe.

BOOK OF NEXT MONTH

Our book for next month is the Library of America edition of the works of Zora Neale Hurston. A courageous black dramatist, anthropologist, and social commentator, Hurston wrote honestly about the faults of both blacks and whites. Too proud to accept the condescension of white liberals, she preferred working as a maid for white women rather than looking for a handout.



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Dr. Paul Gottfried
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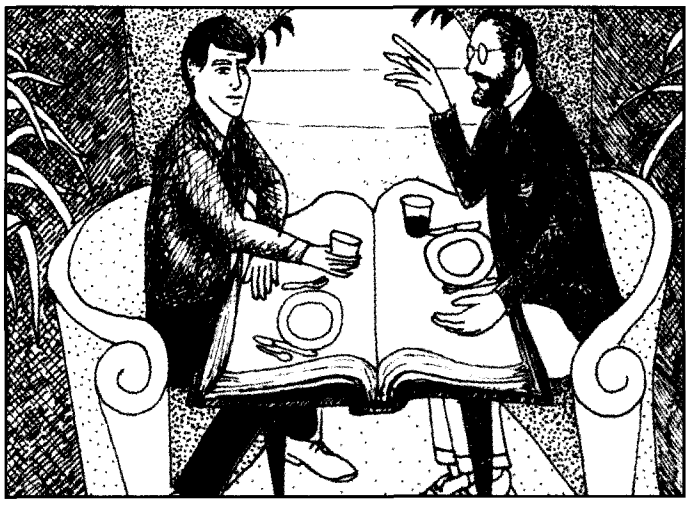

H. Ward Sterett

The Art of Creation

by Thomas Fleming

An Interview With Dean Koontz

"No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money."
—Samuel Johnson

G. K. Chesterton was an avid reader of popular fiction, particularly the so-called "penny dreadfuls," whose everyday morality and concentration on plot and character made them more wholesome reading than the pretentious productions of modernist literature. Chesterton's prejudice is shared today by millions of readers who would not beat Donald Barthelme or Norman Mailer with a stick but cannot board an airplane or go to the beach without an 800-page thriller by Dean Koontz or Stephen King. Mr. Koontz's "paranoid style" of fiction has become increasingly attractive to Americans who have begun to suspect that there is more to government than an honest desire to serve the people. Not coincidentally, he is a Chronicles *reader.*

I drove away from John Wayne Airport in my rental car and turned onto MacArthur Boulevard. The signs for Irvine, Newport Beach, and Fashion Island are sinister reminders of government projects that engineer monsters and of agents who kill the citizens in order to spare them the unhappiness of ordinary life, but the sun is shining, and the late-November air is warmer in Southern California than in Illinois. Mr. Koontz and dog Trixie greet me at the door, and the two of us—Trixie remains at home—go out to lunch at a good hotel. Drinking a robust but mellow cabernet with my spicy seafood, I ask Mr. Koontz if he is happy to have turned this bustling part of Southern California into a landscape as horrifying as one of Lovecraft's New England villages.

TF: When I go to Mississippi, I almost expect to see the McCaslins on a deer drive, but when I drive to your corner of the world I am almost afraid to get out of the car, much less sit on the beach, for fear that a government agent might be waiting for me.

DK: I am not anti-government. There is obviously a role for government in our lives, though not the kind of government we have today. The Founders set up a political system that protected the liberties that we're rapidly trying to give away. After the office building was blown up in Oklahoma City, the *New York Times* called up to ask if the author of *Dark Rivers of the Heart* felt any responsibility. I said, "There's nothing in any of my books that encourages people to blow up buildings or kill people," and when I asked if he had actually read *Dark Rivers*, he said no, but he'd been told it was anti-government.

I tried to explain to him that my novel was anti-totalitarian and encouraged individual responsibility, which is the opposite of blowing up buildings.

I tell Koontz that these fine distinctions hardly matter to "journalists" who do not hesitate to brand a writer as an apostle of violence or bigotry without taking the trouble to read anything he has written. (Koontz points out the abuse heaped on Carolyn Chute's recent novel—"Some of the most savage things I have ever seen directed against a writer." It is not simply that Mrs. Chute has drawn a sympathetic portrait of a militiaman, but that she is gen-

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uinely fond of the simple people she writes about. "Most highbrow writers," Koontz observes, "do not like ordinary life.")

The really amazing thing, we agree, is the smug obtuseness of the chattering classes that identify government as the source of all blessings and regard religion and regionalism as the ultimate evils.

"In this bloodiest century of human history, how can anyone doubt that evil can arise from government? Statists always bring up the Spanish Inquisition, which killed a few thousand people, a minor horror compared with what anti-religious governments have done in modern times," and he ticks off the tens of millions killed by Hitler, Stalin, and Mao. "It's not paranoid to look unflinchingly at the source of so much evil in this century," he says, wondering why the press is so willing to distort the facts.

Koontz's latest novel, False Memory, *includes not-so-subtle allusions to the false reporting that sold the NATO attack on Yugoslavia as a humanitarian rescue mission.*

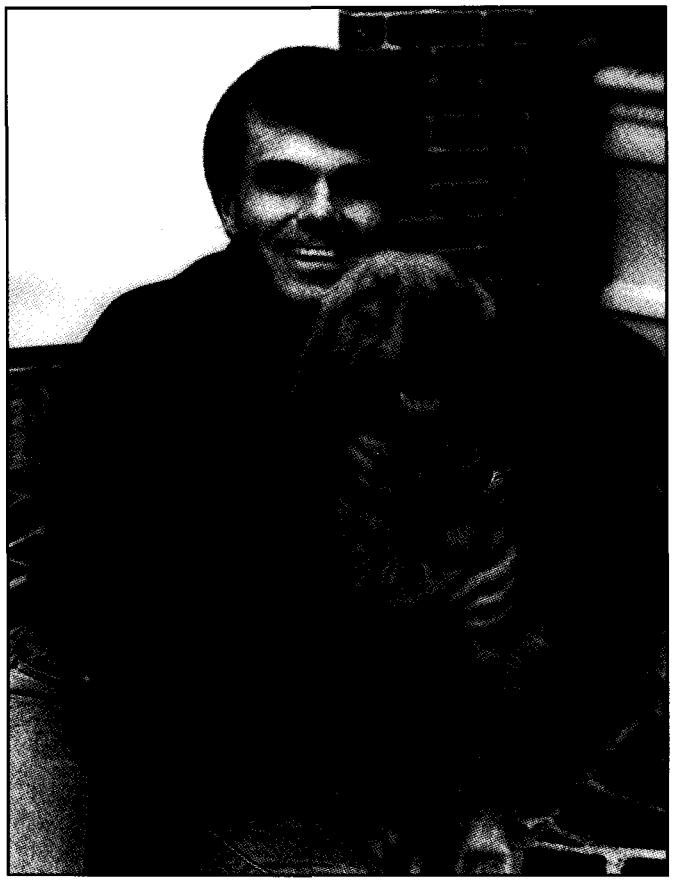
DK: One of the primary themes of this novel is our society's increasing inability to distinguish fantasy from reality. It was so Orwellian, the way that war was sold to the country, the way the news was manufactured—and so badly manufactured.

It wasn't even subtly done. On the one hand were the new Nazis, on the other were the innocent victims. There was no reality base to it. Most people in the media simply wanted this war to happen, and it terrified me to see the press so warmongering, when we had thought of the media as pacifistic. Because I love this country and love this country's history, I was alarmed by our lawless and astoundingly violent policy in Yugoslavia, but I was even more disturbed to discover that many well-educated people of my acquaintance were indifferent to the lawlessness and oblivious of its Orwellian nature. As far as I am aware, we went to war for the first time against a country that had done nothing to us or to an ally. A stain on this country . . . calculatedly bombing civilian targets. It is difficult to understand the true motivations of the journalists who sold this war, though a large part of it is that these people are fools.

I ask if a novelist with strong opinions is ever tempted to preach. He occasionally may cross the line, he concedes, but he always remembers that preaching does not persuade. A good story can, however, change people's minds, as the volume of his mail attests. Koontz receives about 10,000 letters a year, most of them to a post office box whose number is printed in all his recent books. Including the box number did not increase the flow of mail, but it did guarantee that no publisher's secretary would neglect to forward the letters.

His most popular book to date, measured by letters as well as sales, may be Watchers, *probably because of its emotional impact. Koontz says he is not at all afraid of sentiment, which is not the same thing as sentimentality, "except, of course, in romance novels where sentimentality may be wanted." In recent film, as in fiction, there is a striking lack of strong characters and emotional content, though Koontz professes himself an eternal optimist not just about life but about the arts.*

DK: That is part of our obligation as Christians, and I do see signs of a change for the better. *The Sixth Sense*—an uplifting movie with an amazing performance by Bruce Willis—is a reminder of how poorly most scripts these days are written, how full of holes the plots are, and how cheap the tricks are they play on audiences. This is an emotionally powerful film, one that plays fair with the audience. It says, ultimately, that life has meaning, which is rarely a belief expressed in Hollywood's current cesspool of cynicism.



Jerry Bauer

Dean Koontz and his dog, Trixie.

Speaking of messages in fiction, Koontz says that his favorite writers have always been didactic novelists but that didacticism has to be kept under control. Asked to name his favorite novelists, Koontz begins to discuss Dickens, but digresses.

DK: In college I was in rebellion, and I was reading people they didn't want me to read—James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler—what a pair of moralists those two are . . . Cain writes about people who make all the mistakes, but boy do they pay for them. They don't just walk away into the sunset. *Double Indemnity*, by the way, has one of the best last lines in English-language fiction . . . The guilty couple is on a cruise, and the man—coming home to arrest and imprisonment—now realizes that he's sacrificed everything for a woman who is mentally and morally sick. She comes into the cabin wearing a red dress, and, after some small talk, he turns to the portal, looks up, and thinks, *The Moon*. Of course, those final two words refer to lunacy, but also to the gravitational pull exerted in each of us by the dark side of human nature, to the fact that we are fallen. Yet there is, in addition, an ineffable mystery in the effect of those two words. They resonate down on that deep level where language knots with instinct.

It's this quality of fiction that makes me think that it has more truth than nonfiction. It reaches you in mysterious ways that go beyond analysis, beyond what even the author can explain, though I'm not a deconstructionist. I know that if I'm sitting

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with the author, nine times out of ten he's going to help me understand why something worked.

I ask him how he plans his books, because I have the impression that his complex structures must require elaborate outlines, character summaries, and all the usual paraphernalia taught in the Write-by-Numbers fiction courses. In fact, he says, he does not do any planning, not even an outline.

> An enduring literature has to speak to eternal human values—although that sentence may be in itself a thoughtcrime.

DK: I start with a premise, though a premise by itself is not enough to interest me in a book. In *False Memory*, I ran across "autophobia," which is an interesting idea, that someone could become afraid of himself. The next step is to figure out the sort of character who would have this problem. . . . At that point I start writing, and I have no idea of where I am going. I have to do many drafts of a page—I finish a page before I move to the next one. Before I got a computer, my wife kept track of the typing paper I used, and she discovered that I reworked every page, on average, 30 times. Now, with a computer, I'm more obsessive still.

I build a book the way marine polyps build a coral reef. They sacrifice themselves in the millions and gradually build it up. I am gradually building it up out of all these dead hours of work that are behind every page. Your subconscious works ahead in ways that you are unaware of. You've been thinking there's a terrible problem 100 pages ahead; wondering how are you going to handle this, but when you get there—if you go slowly—you realize that it has already been solved. . . . In fact, the characters seize control of the book and take it wherever they want to go.

TF: If a work doesn't escape from the artist's control, it will never be fully successful. A poem or novel is like a baby that must have the umbilical cord cut and begin to have a life of its own.

DK: That is exactly what happens, and it is the strangest thing about writing fiction. It becomes so real to you that when characters are having amusing dialogue, I find myself laughing out loud. Or I can be moved to tears when something terrible happens to characters that I have not been anticipating.

In *The Bad Place*, there is a boy with Down Syndrome. It got to the point in the story where he had to die, but I couldn't kill him off, I had become so deeply attached to him, and the book came to a grinding halt. I tried to move forward and had to tear up pages. I had never seen that he was going to die, and I simply couldn't handle it. Yet I knew that every major character in the book was an analogue for a particular Christian figure and that on a subtextual level, certain Christian themes were playing out. This boy was an innocent, pure of heart, who brings a revealed faith to the other characters. He was Christ, in an archetypal sense, and therefore *had* to die to advance the story. When I let him fulfill his destiny, let him die, the story went smoothly thereafter.

TF: When Trollope decided to kill off Mrs. Proudie, many of his readers were outraged, even though she was a dreadful lady. According to biographers, Trollope never had an entirely rational plan for his writing but daydreamed his way into novels. As an "intellectual," Trollope was entirely conventional, and he was far wiser in his heart than in his more rational calculations.

DK: Fiction is not primarily intellectual. When it is successful, it speaks to the heart before it speaks to the mind. If it is really successful, it speaks to both, as it does in the case of Dickens. I hadn't read Dickens seriously until after college, because I had this stupid idea that I would find him boring. Then I picked up *A Tale of Two Cities* and read it over the course of a weekend, and at one o'clock Sunday morning, reaching that magnificent final sentence, I sat in bed with tears streaming down my face.

Dickens was a very popular novelist, as, in fact, are all the writers who survive from earlier centuries in literature: Shakespeare and Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain. Popularity is not the only thing; otherwise Jackie Collins would have been long ago enshrined by the Nobel Committee.

An enduring literature has to speak to eternal human values—although that sentence may be in itself a thoughtcrime. At this point an academic critic would ask: If popularity, achieved by addressing the values of ordinary people, is required for literature to last, what about Henry James? In the first place, James obviously wanted to attract a large audience, otherwise why did he publish 100 books? But secondly, a lot of James has not in fact lasted, because it was too dry and earnestly intellectual.

TF: James engaged in a sort of exchange with H.G. Wells. Wells insisted on the importance of compelling stories with broad social purpose, while James emphasized serious psychological analysis. Frankly, though it is heresy to say so, I think Wells' best work—*The History of Mr. Polly*, *Tono-Bungay*, *The Time Machine*—will outlast most of James'.

DK: The irony of James is that his most enduring book is—

DK and TF simultaneously: *The Turn of the Screw*.

DK: Is the business of literature really academic analysis, or is it the recreation of human experience? I got in a number of whacks, you'll notice, against the academy in *False Memory*.

When did the idea get established that, if a book is popular, it can't be good? . . . If you go back to the 1940's, you find people like John P. Marquand who won the Pulitzer Prize but also wrote the Mr. Moto mysteries under his own name. . . . Graham Greene may have been the last popular writer who was taken seriously by the elitist critics.

The problem began with the boom in higher education following World War II, when college rolls doubled and tripled, and there were not enough capable philosophers and literary historians to handle the influx of veterans going to school on the G.I. Bill. As a result, colleges had to hire all those second- and third-rate professors who eventually became tenured—and

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trained the current generation of hack professors. By now, we are suffering from several generations of educators who are not themselves well educated, people who don't know much about anything, whose knowledge of literature is abysmal. These are the snobs who enhance their own social position by inventing critical theories and erecting artificial criteria.

This is the background for the creation of "classism" in literature. Dissertations had already been done on most of the really good books, so these people in their drive to be published in academic journals, had to move to the empty, quasi-literary books.

TF: What they like, in fact, is academic fiction, which is only written to be analyzed by some graduate student writing a dissertation.

DK: "Academic" is a better word than literary, because most of these books are not literary at all.

TF: Academic writers cannot handle the basics of plot and character, much less describe the world that any of us has seen or experienced. . . . I suppose it would be bad taste for us to name names? What about the middlebrow writers, who try for a big audience while pretending to be serious—all those writers who became TV celebrities in the 60's—Truman Capote, Gore Vidal, William Buckley, Norman Mailer . . .

DK: You call them middlebrow, though many would think of them as highbrow, but they are not, after all, writing for pure art. Norman Mailer—does anyone read him anymore? He always seems bombastic, scarcely human. Some of these writers—Philip Roth, for example—begin well, but eventually they write for the critics, endlessly repeating the things for which they were originally acclaimed.

On a lower level, there are people like Bret Easton Ellis, Tama Janawitz, Jay McInerney. Fortunately, most of this stuff washes out in five years, partly because it's anti-human: They do not like people very much. Why become a novelist if you dislike people, who are the stuff of fiction?

TF: You must have met these people in college, who spent the day in a corner of the cafeteria, smoking cigarettes and cackling over how stupid everyone else was, while everyone else was having a much better time. Those are the people who now control the literary business.

DK: In *Intensity*, I used the phrase "reckless caring" to describe what I think life is ultimately all about. When that novel came out, I knew that I would get flak because the heroine risks her life for someone she doesn't know. Some reviewers said it was impossible, despite the fact that it happens all the time in war. Then came the news story of the actor Mark Harmon who, when he saw an automobile accident, leaped out and rescued kids from a burning car—this was a Hollywood *actor* who put his own life at risk. Ordinary people do such things thousands of times a day, and yet we hardly ever hear of it in this media-saturated world.

TF: It doesn't fit the media's view of human nature. They would like us to believe that people are only able to do good if they are controlled by the superior forces of government or a group of experts. Many of your most heroic characters, on the other hand, have had unhappy childhoods.

DK: I've talked about my father a number of times in interviews but never to complain about "poor me, the victim." In fact, there were two primary influences in my childhood: my father—a dangerous alcoholic who was later diagnosed as a sociopath—and my mother, who was wonderful and kind. She gave me strength, but no journalist ever writes about my mother, though I talk about her as much as about my father. They are fascinated only by the negative. The fact is that without the childhood I had, I might never have become a writer or have been as successful as I am. I have nothing to complain about.

This century has produced many great evils, but there is no greater evil than Freudianism. At some point in my career, I made the conscious decision to write anti-Freudian novels. I started writing about people who were not what you would expect, considering what their childhoods were like.

You'd be surprised how reviewers can't understand what I am doing. They want what they call "deep characterization"; in other words, tracing motivation to some heinous thing a character's grandmother did.

TF: What they don't understand is the Christian conception of human character, that we can succeed sometimes in spite of our backgrounds, so long as there is a spark of faith; that we can forever be turning our misery into something usable for ourselves. That is what I see in your best characters, the will to survive no matter how weak they think they are or how terrified, even if, when they see the words "fear no evil," they experience a shudder of terror, because they fear everything every day.

DK: You don't become popular today by admitting to being a Christian.

TF: The culture is not non-Christian but anti-Christian . . .

DK: . . . while priding itself on being the most tolerant culture in history . . .

TF: . . . because ever since Voltaire, tolerance has been defined as hating all things Christian.

In *Dark Rivers of the Heart*, you have portrayed perhaps the ultimate bad father, though this psychotic killer who tortures and dismembers women is far from being the most evil character in the novel. That distinction belongs to Roy Miro, the government agent with a heart of gold.

DK: The hero's father actually represents my worst fears of my own father. And then I begin to wonder: If government can be a father, what happens when government becomes deranged as my real father was? Roy Miro is my father elevated to the organizational level. His motivations are just wonderful: He saves people from their unhappiness—although by killing them.

TF: At least the homicidal maniac father does what he does for pure pleasure, like the Marquis de Sade. I'd rather have Sade running our government than the Roy Miros who only want what is best for us.

Speaking of villains, *False Memory* has a memorable villain in the ominously named Dr. Mark Ahriman, the self-centered psychotherapist who plants false memories and induces psychosis, murder, and suicide. You obviously don't think that all

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psychologists are dangerous, but are you suggesting there is a potential danger when counselors and therapists hold such psychic power over their patients? You obviously know about the real problem of therapists taking advantage of their female patients . . .

DK: We shouldn't be surprised if only ten percent of psychiatrists are serious about—or capable of—doing good, while the other 90 percent are destructive or ineffective. You'd find the same ratio with plumbers or teachers.

> Creating a novel is a humble reflection of God's creativity, because I hold the fictional world in my mind, in vast detail.

TF: In *False Memory*, the highbrow characters are entirely despicable, and the hero has consciously turned away from intellectuals, rejecting the world of theory for the real world of everyday life. The other psychologist in the book, the hero's stepfather, is also (like his ambitious wife) an egocentric jerk.

DK: I had fun working with these two psychologists who had written books. A reader told me "You really gave it to pop psychology," but in fact virtually all psychology is pop psychology. It certainly isn't science.

As a Christian and a lifelong reader in all the sciences, I don't see the great gap between religion and science that is supposed to exist. Gertrude Himmelfarb, for example, seems to be opposed to science *per se*, especially viewing the work of geneticists as a force for moral chaos. But no knowledge is inherently evil. The issue is how, with our free will, we use that knowledge. I don't see many places where science disproves anything we believe. God gave us the ability to learn, the desire to understand creation, and in applying that ability, we are in His service as long as we do not become arrogant.

TF: One of your best lines comes at the beginning of *False Memory*: It is a quotation from your mythical "Book of Counted Sorrows," namely, "God is in the details, too." This line seems to sum up your position that goodness—God, even—can be discovered in the little textures of everyday life. You seem to be telling people to find moral courage and tragedy and beauty in the ordinary round of things, to "Brighten the corner where you are."

DK: Atheists are always dissatisfied with everything, and you know there is no more evangelical group than atheists. In interviews and conversations, if the subject of faith comes up, they give the usual line, "How can you believe in a god who allows terrible things to happen?" Both Scripture and science tell us that for every force there is an opposing force, throughout nature. It is out of this dynamic tension that we develop our love of beauty and our passion for truth. Without *risk*, we have no journey, no meaning. An atheist, setting material comfort as his primary goal, thinks I am an idiot when I talk about this.

TF: A holy fool perhaps? Life is both too beautiful and too evil to be explicable by some mechanical theory. We experience both gratuitous good and gratuitous evil. Acknowledging my own inclination toward evil was my first step toward conversion.

DK: I have experienced within myself a kind of tug toward things that are despicable. I distrust anyone who says they don't have these feelings, because they are precisely the people who want to tell you how to live. We are aware of a struggle between good and evil within ourselves that reflects the larger struggle within creation. When you become attuned to that, you see it everywhere.

If you don't have faith you worry unreasonably about everything—like Gertrude Himmelfarb—worry about imposing restrictions on everyone. Sometime I would like to discuss quantum physics, particularly string theory, with such people. Most quantum physicists don't talk this way publicly, but some say that they cannot escape the conclusion that what they are looking at is not just an ordered but a created universe.

Quantum physics tells us that past, present, and future exist simultaneously, that the flow of time is an illusion, that reality consists of infinite and largely unseen dimensions, that everything in the universe is intimately related. To me, this is perfectly consistent with my belief that the universe is a creation, that it exists within the mind of God. Creating a novel is a humble reflection of God's creativity, because I hold the fictional world in my mind, in vast detail. Using my creativity, I feel connected to that greater creative spirit. I *feel* its reality. When my characters seize the story, I know some small measure of the joy and sorrow that our Creator must feel at the consequences of our free will.

TF: Letting his characters live is the novelist's imitation of the Christian God who made us free even to rebel against him. In an ideal society, not everyone is an artist, but everyone creates something.

DK: The people I know who are happy refuse to blame their misery on others, and they are almost always in the business of creating things. Many of my friends are in the building trades and are as creative as most writers. Ironically, they are happier than most writers, because the *act* of creation satisfies them, and they are not plagued by the inflated egos and competitiveness of many writers who live not for the chance to create, but for the aftermath of creation: Celebrity.

TF: Some people want to be "writers" without actually having to write anything.

DK: When I got my first multimillion-dollar contract, many writers called up to say, "Wonderful! After these three books, you'll never have to write again." I was astonished.

Though I've done well by writing, I don't write for money. My friends are not rich or consciously intellectual; they are mostly skilled craftsmen, who have the same sensibility about life as I do—and they are mostly conservative. They work hard, and they know what life is about. Like them, I love what I do, and after many years I have done well.

TF: In Samuel Johnson's terms, I suppose, you could be called a rich blockhead. c

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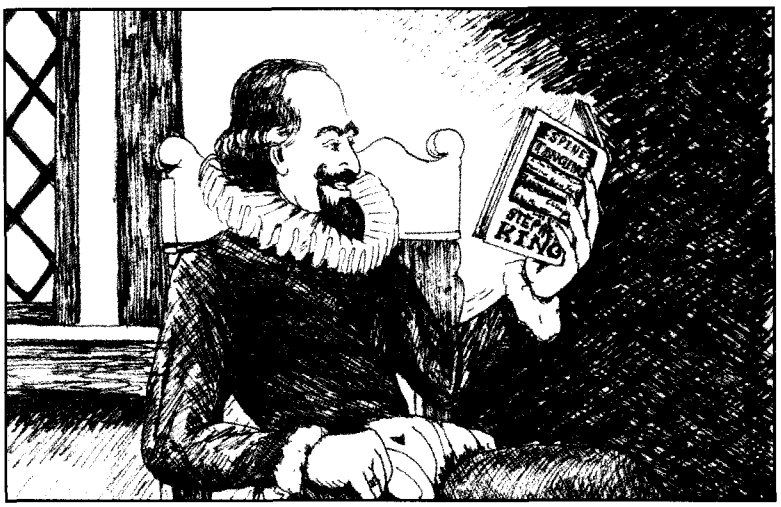
Storytellers and Fakers

Has Anyone Read *Infinite Jest*?

by Tony Outhwaite



H. Ward Sherett

A writer, asked during a literary party what her new novel was about, turned on the questioner with an expression combining irritation, indignation, and pity, and replied, "My novels aren't *about* things!" Some time later, this same writer would denounce Stephen King in print for hogging the marketplace and for his alleged role in censoring her work, since his works were widely displayed in bookstores while hers were not.

A publisher, when told that an agreement had been made whereby Barnes & Noble would help to promote, on an annual basis and free of charge, a certain type of generally difficult book, twisted her face into a sneer and proclaimed, "That is not a neutral act!" Not long after, this publisher would be heard singing the praises of an independent bookstore whose manager was known to denounce certain customers as unworthy of his attention.

An editor, queried about his range of interests, replied, "Well, I'm not interested in books *per se*; I'm more interested in the metaphysics of thought, in the gray areas of language, and particularly in the flow of the cosmic."

While this third incident is not, like the first two, literally true, the mindset that it illustrates does represent a problem for fiction and for those writers, critics, editors, and academics who seek to advance its cause: the struggle between the elitist, standoffish supporters of a self-consciously literary and often pretentious, boring, and even worthless literature, and those for whom a more accessible and traditional type of book, a story well written and well told, still is something to be nurtured, published, and respected.

Just before Christmas, Ron Rosenbaum of the New York *Observer* nominated Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* as the best novel of the century, citing its Shakespearean qualities. Some in the literary community will froth at the mouth over this suggestion, convinced that such a choice, personal and unverifiable as it is, should better be accorded to a more worthy work, ideally one selected by a jury of all their best chums and cronies. There are certainly other possible nominees, some more appropriate but others infinitely worse, which are probably the ones many literary types have in mind: something long and difficult, possibly impenetrable and unreadable, such as Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* or Harold Brodkey's *The Runaway Soul*. If some jokesters suggested that the latter might better have been titled *The Runaway Novel*, for its interminable and claustrophobic self-absorption, it is easy to forget that, a century and a half ago, the books of Charles Dickens, almost none of them short, were regarded as both literary *and* popular and told compelling stories to boot; indeed, it is one reason why such novels as *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations* are still read today in sensible college courses as examples of great literature. In today's publishing world, editors have come to separate the literary from the commercial, and in various cases this makes perfect sense. The hooter alarms should go off, however, every time a self-anointed judge of all that is good lapses into elitist jargon signifying what Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé Indians, back in the 1870's, might have stated much more simply in his broken English: "Literature good; telling stories bad."

In an ideal world, literary novels and commercial novels would be equally excellent, albeit in different ways. Many of today's best commercial novelists are very good at what they do: Stephen King has a marvelous imagination and, in the tradition of Poe and Lovecraft, can channel this into strange and gripping stories told in evocative prose, while a writer such as Patricia Cornwell, with her intricate plots and brisk narrative style, turns out a good effort almost every time, usually showcasing her favorite heroine, Chief Medical Examiner Kay Scarpetta.

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Yet as successful as these and other commercial authors are, one always has the odd feeling that their publishers are slightly ashamed of them and wish they were instead publishing the latest literary masterpiece, perhaps the new novel by Balzac, book jacket enlivened with a photograph of the author swilling lukewarm beer and pounding on the bar at New York's White Horse Tavern in the grand tradition of Dylan Thomas or, for the home crowd's benefit, competing in the *Tour de France*.

Many of publishing's elite have lost sight of the fact that the great writers like Balzac and Dickens and George Eliot and Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, or such modern literary masters as Musil and Hemingway, were not only elegant stylists in total command of vocabulary and syntax but gifted storytellers who possessed the ability to define time, place, and social circumstances and deal with the moral and ethical questions of their era by the way they used language and created characters and situations. They were not neurotic word-meisters fussing obsessively over the id or academic writers composing, time after time, novels about "struggling with the problems of being a writer." It has been customary to denigrate the so-called European "academic" painters of the late 19th century as lacking in creative ingenuity, but one cannot deny they knew how to paint. The pomposity of some of their canvases—with titles describing pretentiously staged scenes along the lines of *Napoleon Inspecting His Troops Before Austerlitz*, perhaps, or *Roman Centurions Crossing the Alps*—may have been ridiculed as passé by the trendy critics of their day, but it is possible to maintain that there was more artistic worth, certainly more of a message, on their canvases than in the dribblings and slashings of Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline, with their New Age titles like *Concept Number 41*. Yet many of the more academic novelists of today, rather than showing preoccupation with traditional approaches to their art, seem as incapable of telling a convincing story as Pollock would have been of painting a Delacroix or weaving a Navajo rug. Residing in an hermetic world of perpetual grievance, they continue to regard writers who tell stories as old hat and faintly suspicious, possibly unsavory.

Given their subject matter—what little there was of it—Pollock and his cronies usually did not give their works titles like *Provincial Governor Gazing at a Bust of St. Dominic*, or *Virgin With Unmuzzled Bandicoot*, but these days, book titles so often sound alike that one might be forgiven for wishing that more writers would do just that. Today's literary galaxy is not one circle but many interlocking ones, yet too many of its inhabitants share with a certain type of academic nonfiction specialist the elitist and misguided idea that any book widely read must be inferior; it must have been dumbed down, to use Daniel Patrick Moynihan's celebrated phrase. This attitude carries with it the unmistakable whiff of contempt for others that has too often characterized the cultural elite, the notion that a novel by Brodkey, or even by a more accessible writer such as John Updike, is only for "our crowd," and not for loathsome bourgeois types such as computer executives, smart-aleck yuppies selling derivatives on Wall Street, or members of the Waiters' and Bartenders' Union.

Writers like Philip Roth, the late Joseph Heller, or newcomer Charles Frazier have managed to have it both ways by virtue of sheer talent: to be literary while at the same time telling stories irresistible even to average readers; to create works that are inventive, humorous, even profound; to sell impressive quantities of books and still be nominated for, and win, the highest of literary awards. Recently, writer and former Secretary of the Navy James Webb, in an editorial-page essay in the *Wall Street Journal*, praised Heller's *Catch-22* as one of the great modern novels, a model of literature and storytelling. Yet there are those in the literary community who grumble that this, too, is illegitimate, Heller and Roth and many other writers like them having sold out to the "establishment," to Mammon, to corporate entities like Barnes & Noble or some other alleged enemy, all through the fiendish con game of actually being good at telling a story, of doing what once upon a time (back in the days when that phrase was still in use) all genuine writers knew how to do. Inherent in this childishly antagonistic attitude is the tattered Marxist notion that someone cannot have gotten rich, or become successful, due to intellect, talent, and perseverance alone—such a person must have cheated, or stolen, or otherwise taken advantage of someone inferior. How quaint, then, to overhear modern literary types talking up the true meaning of art at cocktail parties while high-mindedly claiming, as if in an episode of *Seinfeld*, that their books are not really "about anything," as if that were some grand achievement.

Equally preposterous is that related and informal subspecies of literature consisting of ostentatiously literary, and too often all but incoherent, books about which the intelligentsia pontificate endlessly but which few seem actually to have read. Swollen, hysterically undisciplined novels such as David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* and Norman Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost* are suddenly blessed as works of genius, much as Harold Brodkey was given a cover story in *New York* magazine proclaiming him "The Genius" before his dreary *magnum opus* had even appeared. Many publishing elites and other envious writers, if not actively bad-mouthing these works, make vague comments casting doubt upon the books' alleged elegant qualities. There is no excuse for the incoherence, but one could suggest logical reasons for the failure to read the books themselves: The most relevant is that these books are unreadable, but some of the more cunning members of the chattering classes have caught on to the reality that there is no reason whatever to read one of these books even if everyone else *is* talking about it. There is an ingenious strategy employed by attendees at philosophers' conventions or at gatherings such as the annual Potato Chip Snack Food Association Convention: It is always possible to deflect, evade, or fake the answer to any question by replying with a tricky phrase like, "Ah, but what do you mean by *that*?"; "But is that always possible?"; or, in Nabisco terminology, "Yes, but who's to say what Olestra *really* is?" And since, in the halls of postmodernism, there are usually no matters of plot, character, dialogue, or social setting worthy of debate (with the exception of politically correct necessities like typecasting all businessmen, and especially conservative businessmen, as lowlife swine), one is then free to spend hours carping about minutiae, and indeed there are entire symposia devoted to such crucial literary matters. Anyone with the fortitude to attend the Modern Language Association convention will find, on a yearly basis, more than 500 panels, including such can't-miss offerings as the formal annual meetings of the Slavonic Literary Society and the Association of Melville Scholars and, one fears, the informal annual get-togethers of the League of Hermaphroditic Steinbeck Scholars, the gala reunion of Cameroonian-American Semaphore Poets, and—in odd-numbered years only—the Council of Disabled Comanche Travel Writers Who Are Also Gourmet Chefs.

Yet there are seldom panels—not literary panels, in any

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case—at which the works of pure storytellers are discussed in serious terms. It is hard to conceive of a symposium for which the program would be announced as: "Social and Cultural Implications: '3 May. Bistritz. Left Munich at 8:35 P.M. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning.'" This, of course, is the opening line of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, one of the most celebrated novels of all time, unfortunately remembered today more for Bela Lugosi's lurid 1931 film portrayal of the count than for the fact that the book was considered, at the time of its publication in 1897, a *tour de force* of straightforward storytelling, heavy with history and atmosphere, however peculiar. The newer literary lions, such as the "brat-packers" of the 1980's, seem to think that telling a story involves little more than the use of entire laundry lists of brand-name consumer items to set a scene and define a social milieu so that, rather than creating memorable people with their own idiosyncrasies, the pictures drawn are of clichéd characters wearing Nikes or smoking Marlboros, drinking a certain vodka or reeking of a particular fashionable cologne. Restless and misdirected, they drift from restaurant to nightclub to apartment to bed and back again, possessing (like their authors) little genuine sense of morality or ethics. To be sure, Jay McInerney and Bret Easton Ellis and their cohorts have appeared in public to fulminate about the evils of capitalism, Ronald Reagan, and Newt Gingrich and to air various inane personal grievances, but one wonders how different their outlook on all this would be had Brezhnev or Gorbachev become president of the United States. In the practice of their craft, these literary youngsters—who are no longer so young, although their public displays of pique and noisy tirades in crowded restaurants about bad reviews are adolescent in their whiny self-involvement—show only marginal talents for plot and character. In their arrogance as self-proclaimed social critics, they would not be pleased to hear their work compared with that of Judith Krantz and Danielle Steel, neither of them elegant stylists but both perfectly respectable storytellers.

Popular literature, in both theory and practice, can encompass many different types of novel: thrillers, stories about family life, the business world, entertainment, sports, academe, the cities, the wide-open spaces of the American West. There have been, through the years, a great many writers who have operated in these areas, excellent at their craft even if, in some cases, only up to a point. Mention any one of their names to an ostentatiously "literary" writer and the atmosphere suddenly turns very dark indeed: Suggestions of philistinism, questionable taste, or, worst of all to some, the failure to be hip, hang in the air, unpleasant for everyone within earshot unless the more sensible point out, if they dare, that Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck, Graham Greene (abominable phony though he might have been personally, as Paul Johnson has pointed out), and even such modernists as J.D. Salinger all were good with a story. The later generations that produced such writers as Updike, Joyce Carol Oates, Don DeLillo, and Martin Amis have been well represented by these and others, all of them regarded as literary, but all perfectly capable of telling intriguing stories that illuminate different elements of society and hold the reader's attention. They might appear on literary panels to discuss the more obscure aspects of their craft but probably not to talk about creating a plot and telling a story. Such mundane matters are too middlebrow for comfort: Better to delve into problems of hermeneutics, semiotics, aesthetics, and, if time permits, everyone has had plenty to drink, and the crowd does not suddenly turn unruly, possibly even prosthetics. And one should never count on seeing younger, less formal, and politically incorrect writers with unusual story material such as Carl Hiassen (too funny and too much about Florida—such an uncultured state) or Sue Grafton (too alphabetical—and where is the opposing view that there is nothing wrong with misspelling something?), Scott Turow (too trial-lawyerish, unless one is looking to sue a Republican), or John Irving (too picky about his children's education: what nerve!).

> How quaint to overhear modern literary types talking up the true meaning of art at cocktail parties while high-mindedly claiming, as if in an episode of *Seinfeld*, that their books are not really "about anything."

In 1927, fantasy and horror writer H.P. Lovecraft wrote a strange novella called *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, in which there are many references to the *Necronomicon*, a forbidden and sinister ancient volume containing formulae for calling up the dead. At one point, rare book collectors were hunting furiously for available copies, a wonderful example of a fictional invention accepted as fact by the uninitiated, and then passed down from reader to reader as something of historical value. This misunderstanding is innocent enough and even droll in the retelling. By contrast, novelist John Gardner wrote in his book-length critical essay *On Moral Fiction* of propaganda as a type of writing employing "overemphasis on texture on the one hand and manipulative structure on the other"—an excellent way to describe many of the more overwrought new "literary" efforts. Yet a conformist intellectual community that celebrates, through its propaganda, this kind of undisciplined and unedited writer as a creative genius—and whose editors brag about how impossible these books were to edit—while denigrating mere storytellers as hacks is not so innocent; it is, in fact, one of the least appealing features of modern literary life.

There will always be writers who tell stories and are good enough at it that they succeed in spite of the roadblocks placed in their path by the guardians of all that is good. There remain, still, editors actively looking for good books that tell good stories, although it often seems that there are even more editors hustling after the latest celebrity memoir, or *The Reverend Al Sharpton's Guide to the Lesser Ballets*. As for the tricksters, the self-involved *faux* literati with no plot ideas other than their own angst, they will move through each day with a springy step, serene in the knowledge that they will always be allowed by their chums highly placed in the intellectual community—fellow travelers in the practice of vanity, mutual flattery, and the brownnose—to fake it.

Tolstoy would be appalled.

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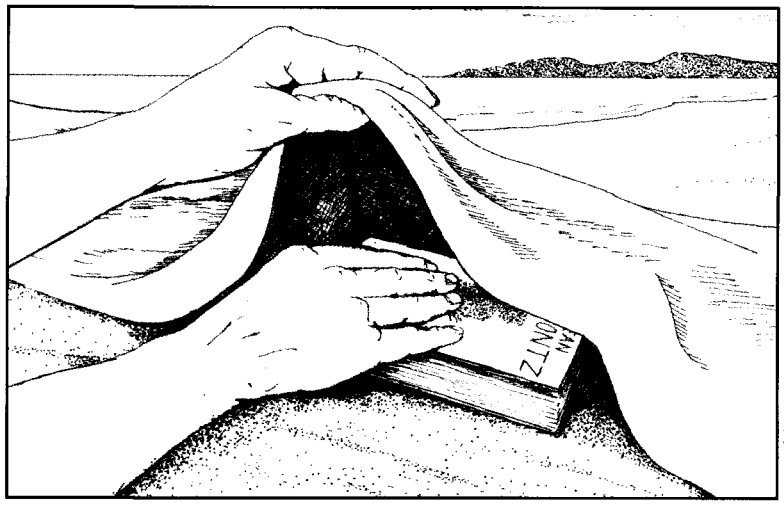
Literary Worth and Popular Taste

Taking Proust to the Beach

by Clay Reynolds



H. Ward Sterett

As an academic trained in the study and appreciation of literature, I have spent the better part of my life staunchly defending the ramparts of literary endeavor against the slings and arrows of outrageous pop-fiction lovers. I have steadily despaired of those who read Stephen King, Terry C. Johnston, Mary Higgins Clark, Danielle Steel, and their ilk. I said things like, "If you want a good ghost story, go read Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. Edgar Allan Poe can't be beat for a good thriller. A great Western is *The Last of the Mohicans*." Then I would wait until my companion was out of earshot, switch my radio from NPR to my favorite C&W station, drive home, draw the shades, and curl up with a good Dean Koontz, Robert B. Parker, or Elmore Leonard novel. And I would tell no one about it, for I was terrified that someone might learn that, in my heart of hearts, I preferred schlock to art. After all, as a college professor, I was supposed to be an arbiter of great literature, not an enthusiastic fan of the "easy read."

It took me a long time to come to terms with this, to understand that the problem lay in the elitism in which I had been trained. Like most of my colleagues, I wanted to be an arbiter of artistic worth, but I refused to admit to reading anything that did not have a canonical stamp of approval. I carried this attitude into my choice of other entertainments as well: plays, film, even television programming. By doing so, I was imitating my academic mentors, trying to fit my taste and sensibilities to those whose opinions I respected, whose aesthetic measuring sticks were hewn out of some solid scholarly notion of what is art and what is not. I wanted to be like them, and I desperately wanted to reach a point where I could eschew popular fiction and look down on it with the same conviction that causes me to sneer whenever I am confronted with the latest television sitcom.

After all, I *never* watch commercial television. I *only* tune in PBS. Right.

I think, though, that I—and they—were missing the point. If we were sincere, we were also missing a lot of good reading and viewing. And as a professional writer, I finally began to realize and embrace an alternative point of view.

You see, it is not whether something is deemed to be literature that matters; it is the value of the canon that is at stake. But that value rests in the breadth of individual erudition, not in the depth. The reason people can read and appreciate something that is popular, even the latest ghost-written celebrity autobiography, and determine its worth is because they have read widely in the established literary tradition. They have experience with those works that have withstood the test of time, those that still speak to us today through their wisdom, beauty, and eloquence. These are the genuine standards by which anything new has to be measured. As educated readers, we have no other reliable source of arbitration.

But it is important to realize that many popular works are written by men and women who are themselves as well read as any stuffy academic. These writers are as sensitive to what creative-writing professors call "the elements of fiction"—character development, solid plot line, credible dialogue, and highly detailed settings—as are any of the literary giants of the canon. Indeed, it is in their adaptation of these admittedly amorphous principles of fiction composition that their success as writers is established and sustained. As T.S. Eliot and others have reminded us, all art depends on the established traditions of the

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Clay Reynolds' most recent books are Players, *a novel, and* Twenty Questions: Answers for the Inquiring Writer.

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individual talents of the past; or, to put it colloquially, where fiction is concerned, there is precious little "new under the sun."

Even so, Eliot was not saying—nor am I—that everything written has to imitate or slavishly ape the past. Rather, those who decide whether a contemporary form has artistic merit should be measuring it against a standard of quality that a huge number of people over a long span of time have established by their patronage (if nothing else). But it is vitally important that readers be well read in the works that established that standard; otherwise, to put it in pure business terms, they are trying to assess the worth of something without knowing the parameters of the market.

This is where the dilution of the canon in the name of political correctness hurts. Dredging up works that have not sustained a readership over a period of time and touting them merely because of the identity of a writer erodes the standard. It suggests that works are valuable because of who wrote them, not because of their innate quality or originality, their staying power, and their capacity to excite and amaze successive generations of readers.

Finding previously ignored writers and adding them to the greater body of Western literature—heretofore, mostly a collection of Dead Old White Guys—is a worthy enterprise, so long as the critical standard applied to such works is the same that would be applied to a forgotten work by a Dead Old White Guy. Again, breadth is more important than depth. The problem is that some of the replacements for the works of DOWGs that one finds in anthologies are not as good—by a long shot—as the stuff that was taken out to make room for them.

Of course, one might argue that—traditional standards be damned—deciding what is "good" and what is not is a subjective process, often colored by the evaluators' personal priorities. But that is precisely my point. If a reader decides that something is *ipso facto* "bad" merely because it appeals to a great many less-than-well-educated people, then hasn't he applied the same sort of prejudice that may well have excluded some writers from the canon all along? Isn't this the same sort of prejudice that kept the novel from achieving literary respect for nearly 200 years?

At the same time such novelists as Trollope and Thackeray and certainly Charles Dickens were penning their fiction with a close eye on what the public wanted to buy, numerous intellectuals and prominent citizens, including no fewer than two American presidents, proudly proclaimed that they had never read a novel and had no intention of doing so. In that era, the novel was rarely if ever taught as a literary form in universities, and the works of such writers as Balzac and Flaubert were kept hidden in public libraries, reserved only for those brave enough to ask for them by name. But the public called for more of the kind of thing that gratified its sensibilities and satisfied its reading appetites. This, I believe, is what led to the elevation of the novel to literary form by such writers as Henry James, Edith Wharton, James Joyce, and William Faulkner, as well as many others. William Dean Howells championed this cause from "The Editor's Chair" for years. But at the same time Howells was promoting the popular novel, Henry James was castigating many of his American contemporaries (particularly Mark Twain) for pandering to low standards and base tastes. James wanted literary quality to be the arbiter of literary art; Howells understood that other appeals were required to sustain a readership.

But even the most common denominator of audiences demands literary quality. Today, when people attend a popular film or play, I think they are seeking the same quality they might find in *bona fide* literary works, more or less. It may be that they are merely seeking pure entertainment or escape, but there is ample literary effort in that vein, too. Much of Shakespeare is frivolous and escapist, and he was not afraid of the Elizabethan equivalent of blood-and-guts violence, gratuitous sex, and slapstick silliness. He was not writing for Oxford dons and delicate intellectual sensibilities but, by and large, for unwashed "groundlings" who paid a penny apiece to be entertained. And he was writing for a queen who had a remarkable sensitivity to good humor and sentimental love stories.

That his works have survived over four centuries is substantial proof that Shakespeare did what he did better than most, but he was not the only person of his time writing good stuff. Still, few of us would pay Broadway prices to see a revival of *Ralph Roister Doister* or *The Dutch Courtesan*, although they are both extremely funny, well-written plays. And consider this: If Shakespeare's reputation rested entirely on *Titus Andronicus*, *Timon of Athens*, or *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, he probably would not have survived as a literary figure. Certainly his name would be no more familiar to most of us than are those of Beaumont and Fletcher or Thomas Marston.

The point is that every age has its *Laverne and Shirley* or *Brady Bunch*, or the comparatively easy humor of its *Seinfeld*, the romantic melodrama of its *Waltons*, and the marginally silly imaginative speculations of its *X-Files* or *Star Trek*. But ours has also produced *Twelve Angry Men*, *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, *The Forsyte Saga*, *Upstairs, Downstairs*, and *I, Claudius*.

Every age has also had its share of naysayers. Samuel Clemens, whose satiric disparagement of James Fenimore Cooper is legendary, pronounced one library to be "excellent" on the basis that the librarians "had the good taste" to exclude all volumes by Jane Austen, "whom the British mercifully permitted a natural death." Readers were so outraged by E.M. Forster's *Passage to India* that travelers passing through the Suez Canal littered the surface of the Red Sea with copies thrown overboard in disgust; incensed and overly pious readers burned copies of *Ulysses*; and in the 1930's, school boards across the country banned Arthur Conan Doyle's collected works from school libraries because they were deemed "a popular distraction."

Paul Scott, author of the celebrated *The Raj Quartet*, which included *The Jewel in the Crown* (naturally filmed for PBS), once told me, "The greatest curse for a contemporary writer is to be labeled 'popular.' It is in their unpopularity, their obscurity, their obtuseness that their worth is measured, not in their appeal to a broad number of people." Scott lamented, "The worst thing that ever happened to John Fowles was to have published *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. He'd have been called a 'great writer' otherwise, not merely a clever romanticist."

The same might be said of such "popular" writers as John Irving, Anne Rice, or even Stephen King, who from time to time aspire to write literary art—and sometimes come very close to achieving it.

Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Gore Vidal, Erica Jong, Michael Crichton, and Ayn Rand all have said at one time or another that they were torn between the desire to be popular and widely read (to say nothing of well paid) and the desire to be taken seriously by the academic arbiters of the canon. Edward Albee once remarked that if he could exchange places

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with Neil Simon, he would. At least, he said, he would exchange incomes. But he could not write "easy plays," works that appealed to the masses. "I've tried," Albee said in response to a student's question, "but I just can't. I have to write for something higher."

Higher? How so? Are we, as readers, truly justified in scoffing at the common denominators of popular fiction? Are the paperback romances and Westerns and crime novels that occupy grocery-store checkout-lane shelves nothing more than passing fancies, worthless trash, facile entertainments? How does one define "entertainment," anyway? And who has the right to say that simply because something amuses, enthralls, or occupies our hearts and minds for a space (however small) that it is somehow less worthy than more self-consciously "artistic" efforts that are often boring if not impenetrable?

Like Shakespeare's plays, many early novels were penned out of a desire to appeal to a broad, common readership. Such works as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Treasure Island*, and *Moll Flanders* were originally published as "entertainments," couched in the pretense that these were "true histories," not fictional recreations designed to amuse as much as to inform. If the blatantly literary efforts of Samuel Richardson were the only seed of the modern novel, chances are it would never have flourished.

Works based on topical subjects and socially immediate themes have always been with us. We should not imagine that, in Aristotle's time, everyone sat around watching the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, although by virtue of the recognition they achieved, it is assumed that they were the most popular writers of the day. Even Aristophanes seasons his plays with jokes about contemporary themes and events, often referring directly to people who were expected to be present during a performance. Indeed, it might well be that Aristotle used these works as examples in the *Poetics* because he wanted to point out that it was possible for something to be both widely appealing as well as intelligently written.

Nor should we imagine that people lay about reading *The Faerie Queene* or *Paradise Lost* or Samuel Johnson's *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* when less literary or artistically pretentious efforts were at hand. Johnson himself, though he outwardly despised Henry Fielding as "an ostler," surprised his biographer Boswell by revealing that he had read at least parts of Fielding's novels, particularly *Joseph Andrews*, and that he enjoyed Fanny Burney's popular works. Even Chaucer's audiences had the choice of listening to his work or to the wildly popular and bawdy *Lays of Marie de France*, which have only been regarded as literary efforts in recent centuries, and we should not forget that Hawthorne's complaint about "that Damned Mob of Scribbling Women" was not directed toward the Brontes or—Mark Twain's complaint aside—even Jane Austen, but toward the antebellum equivalent of the "romance writer," the purveyors of the "easy read."

"Romance" was the operative word of the time, a fine semantic hairsplitting between the tale written purely to entertain and a "novel," which seemed designed only to titillate. But the titillation—the sentimentality, the adventure, even the sexual fantasy; in other words, the popular appeal of the novel—is, after all, what sustained it and permitted it to develop as literary art.

Distinguishing between that which is literary and that which is popular is, then, a fool's errand. Samuel Clemens desperately wanted to be popular in his work and to be wealthy from it as well. He was disappointed in both endeavors. He openly envied Artemus Ward and Bret Harte, whose books and journalistic pieces received popular acclaim. Mark Twain's *magnum opus* was regarded as a "boy's book" in some quarters; in others, it was branded as "unfit for boys to read." So he allied himself with one of the most popular writers of the day in a collaborative effort. His coauthor had more than a dozen books in print and was the darling of the reading circles, ladies' clubs, and the literary societies of the 1880's. Who was this paragon of popular literary effort? His name was Charles Dudley Warner. I am sure that all the readers of this article have his collected works on a prominent bookshelf.

My preconceptions about literary worth changed when I started writing, and the recent changes in New York publishing have altered them further. I do believe it is possible to write and even to publish a work of literary merit, but it is no easier to sell that to the general public than it ever was. Cormac McCarthy, Salman Rushdie, and Thomas Pynchon may be the best-selling literary authors of our day, but they write books that most people do not read. Even many people who buy them do not read them. They would rather read Caleb Carr or Mary Higgins Clark or James Michener or, God help us, Robert James Waller. They tend to place the others on their shelves, saving them for emergencies such as nuclear war, when they will be forced to read extensively and will be grateful for anything they can get their hands on.

And while I am sure that there are those, even today, who regularly curl up with a hefty volume by Dostoyevsky, Thackeray, or Henry James, who cannot wait to get home every night so they can dive back into Proust or *Pamela*, I have to admit that I would prefer to spend my return to the 18th century in *Tom Jones*, a book that was unashamedly written to be popular. I may take a copy of *War and Peace* with me every summer vacation, but I prefer the latest Andrew Vachss or Robert Ludlum for my actual poolside reading.

But even if one's taste runs to the more puerile and pulchritudinous passages of popular pulp, that is nothing to be embarrassed about—or to apologize for. The right attitude is to keep an open mind and to laugh when some patched-sleeved, Birkenstocked pedant announces that this or that is "trash" or "garbage," while busily stuffing the latest thriller, Western, or horror novel under his coat. You see, we know (even if we will not admit it) that it is possible for a Nancy Taylor Rosenberg to turn a good phrase, create a memorable character, or evoke the same muse that moved Anne Bradstreet or George Sand. But if one knows Bradstreet and Sand, then one's ability to recognize the better efforts of a Rosenberg is heightened. And this is the point of reading widely and well, after all. c

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Tipu's Tiger

by Paul Lake

A six-foot tiger, made to entertain
The sultan Tipu Sahib, rips the breast
Of a model Englishman, whose roars of pain
Amuse the sultan and his native guests,
Who, probing its French gears like vultures, all
Delight now in the multicultural.

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Chronicles' Back Issues, Tapes, and Books

* On Creativity, Literature, and Publishing *

WHO KILLED THE BOOK?—May 1998—Tony Outhwaite exposes the book industry as a hothouse of goofiness, George Garrett and Clay Reynolds lament the decline of commercial publishing, Gregory McNamee highlights the state of the university press, and Gene Edward Veith sees Christian publishers in the thrall of Mammon. Plus Jesse Walker on the return of the alehouse, and three poems by Wendell Berry.
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UTOPIAS UNLIMITED—May 1997—Thomas Fleming on the world of W.S. Gilbert, Thomas Bertonneau on the death of science fiction, Jesse Walker on the cult of Philip K. Dick, and Scott P. Richert on the *X-Files*. Plus Samuel Francis reviews the latest biography of H.P. Lovecraft, Joseph E. Fallon on hate-crime statistics, and August Derleth's last editor recalls the founding of Arkham House.
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TREASURE ISLAND—Audiotape—From the Irish Rose Saloon of Rockford to the Admiral Benbow Inn, Thomas Fleming, who has described *Treasure Island* as "the greatest book for boys of all ages," reminds us why this tale of good versus evil continues to provide compelling images of courage, loyalty, and bravery for generation after generation of boys *and* men.
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SIR WALTER SCOTT—Audiotape—Thomas Fleming shows the tremendous value of the articulate reactionary Sir Walter Scott. A staunch opponent of the French Revolution, Scott provided an antidote to the pagan rationalism of his day through scholarly and vivid portrayals of history and myth which were designed to inspire honest people to live with honor and decency.
Tape #: RDS& **$12.50**

WHY WASHINGTON DOESN'T MATTER AND THE CULTURE DOES—Audiotape—E. Christian Kopff, in "The Devil Knows Latin and Why We Need To," demonstrates the necessity of classical studies, while filmmaker Ronald Maxwell celebrates the poetry of Robinson Jeffers. And Roger McGrath tells "Tales From the Politically Correct Crypt," exposing the dirty secrets of the American university.
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"All the News Unfit to Print"

Signs of the Times

Vol. 2 No. 4 April 2000

The fruits of NATO's splendid little war in Kosovo are becoming apparent. Russia has revised its defense doctrine to make it easier to press the nuclear button. The new national security strategy promulgated by Acting President Vladimir Putin calls for "expanded nuclear containment" while pledging to resist Western attempts to dominate the globe. This policy change was sparked—according to Moscow—by NATO's expansion into former Warsaw Pact countries and by the U.S.-led war against Serbia. The 21-page document states that "the term 'partnership' has been consigned to the past."

For years, our Sunday-morning pundits and media global warriors have baited the drowsy bear, finally kicking him once too often—and now they claim that his "belligerence" proves them right. A more accurate view came from the *Moscow Times*, in an editorial on January 15:

> [C]onsider a June 1999 op-ed by *New York Times* writer Thomas Friedman, which quotes a senior NATO official at headquarters in Brussels freely admitting, "Ever since the Cold War ended, NATO planners have been groping for a new mission . . . That's why NATO needs the Balkans as much as the Balkans need NATO . . . " If this is accurate, it is an astonishing account. Just think: NATO's need for a post-Cold War justification surely influenced the mule-like U.S. position that only a NATO-led force, not a UN force, could be parked in Kosovo. After all, the UN already has a mission (one we all democratically agreed upon, by the way—unlike NATO's mission creep). The Kremlin has opened a debate on the architecture of international security. We'd suggest citizens of the Western democracies respond by demanding NATO better justify its existence—its massive expense, its spread through Central Europe—or stand down.

The news from Russia was welcomed in Peking and Delhi, and getting those three together is no mean feat: Albright's true legacy is already upon us. Delhi's *Hindustan Times* (January 18) opined that the one country to be feared in today's world is not Russia, but America:

> When it comes to international forms of terrorism . . . without a shadow of a doubt the worse culprit is the United States of America. Surely this point should need no elaboration—the examples are innumerable, from the bombings and civilian deaths in Kosovo and Iraq to the arbitrariness of the attacks on Sudan, Libya and Afghanistan.

This assessment was reinforced on January 6 by the German daily *Frankfurter Rundschau*, which revealed that a videotape used by NATO to explain the killing of at least 14 civilians aboard a passenger train on a bridge in Serbia last April was shown at *triple* its real speed. As *Agence France Presse* reported on January 6:

> NATO warplanes fired two missiles at the 50 metre long bridge . . . on April 12 . . . General Wesley Clark shortly afterwards showed two videotapes of the train appearing to be traveling fast on the bridge, and said it had then been impossible to alter the missiles' trajectories. . . . A spokesman for NATO's military command in Mons, Belgium, acknowledged in a telephone interview . . . that those images had been altered by "a technical problem." The footage, recorded by a camera installed in the warhead of one of the missiles that destroyed the bridge and train, was altered during the process of being copied for screening, said the spokesman. He said NATO was aware of the problem since last October but did not consider it "useful" to disclose it.

The videos are available on the NATO website: *www.nato.int/kosovo/video.htm*. In the clip marked "Railway I," the pilot has his cursor on the bridge. When allowance is made for the speeded-up tape, it is clear that the train came into view at least six (and more likely ten) seconds before the hit. There was plenty of time for the pilot to miss the oncoming civilian train had he wished to do so.

Even giving the pilot the benefit of the doubt and assuming that the first hit was a mistake, the second one certainly was not. In the clip marked "Railway II," the pilot has turned around after the smoke has mostly cleared. The crippled train is standing still; the pilot holds the cursor directly on it for 12 seconds. It is clear why NATO and the Pentagon "did not consider it 'useful' to disclose" the fact that the video had been sped up. It takes a strong stomach to re-read the statement General Clark made in the aftermath of the bombing (*www.nato.int/kosovo/press/p990413a.htm*). According to him, the pilot was "many miles" away when he launched his missile. And then:

> All of a sudden, at the very last instant, with less than a second to go, he caught a flash of movement that came into the screen and it was the train coming in. Unfortunately he couldn't dump the bomb at that point, it was locked. . . . The mission was to take out the bridge. He realized when it had happened that he had not hit the bridge, but what he had hit was the train. He had another aim point on the bridge, it was a relatively long bridge and he believed he still had to accomplish his mission, the pilot circled back around. He

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put his aim point on the other end of the bridge from where the train had come. By the time the bomb got close the bridge was covered with smoke and clouds, and at the last minute, again in an uncanny accident, the train had slid forward from the original impact and parts of the train had moved across the bridge. And so by striking the other end of the bridge he actually caused additional damage to the train. Two bombs were put into that bridge and in both cases there was an effort made to avoid collateral damage. He couldn't, he saw what had happened, it is one of those regrettable things that happen in a campaign like this and we are all very sorry for it, but we are doing the absolute best we can do to avoid collateral damage, I can assure you of that.

As General Clark's Commander in Chief would have said, grimly, with a finger pointed at the camera, "We did not target that train." But *vae victis*: For all those hoping that the facts of the Kosovo war will eventually become known to the public, the editorialist of the (London) *Spectator* offers a sobering thought in the first issue of the year:

> What people remember is that Blair stood up to the Serb tyrant, put some spine into Clinton, and won. They don't care what is going on now in Kosovo, the purges against the Serbs. They don't care that Slobo and the rest of the gang are still in power in Belgrade. The public knows that we fought, and we won, and that is it.

Amidst the hype surrounding Y2K, very few commentators have taken notice of the fact that, 2,000 years after the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, his disciples are still suffering and dying for their adherence to their faith. As Michael Binyon noted in the (London) *Times* on January 4:

> From Egypt to Indonesia, Nigeria to Lebanon, an upsurge in intercommunal violence has already marked the new millennium as one of the worst periods of global conflict between Christianity and Islam for generations. All around the edges of the Muslim world, tension is growing in communities divided by religion. Clashes, shootings and massacres have highlighted the atavistic suspicions of those who live in the borderlands where the tectonic plates of the world's two largest faiths overlap.

In the first week of this year, dozens of people died in clashes between Muslims and Christians in southern Egypt. In southern Sudan, the number of religiously motivated killings exceeds 10,000 a year. The killing of Christians continues unabated in Indonesia, and goes largely unreported in America. But some Europeans are breaking free from self-censorship. "Muslim mobs hunt Christians on resort island of Lombok" was a major headline in the (London) *Independent* on January 19:

> All 11 churches on the west side of Lombok have been burnt. There are burnt-out cars, and burnt shops and houses. There has been more looting. "This is the home of a wealthy Chinese Christian family," one attacker was reported as saying. "We are all poor Muslim people. We are the real people of Lombok." . . . The chaos of the past two days raises the nightmarish prospect that after a year of slaughter in the remote Indonesian Spice Islands, religious violence is spreading through the archipelago. Unknown thousands have been killed in the past three weeks alone in battles between Muslims and Christians in the islands.

Christians are fair game, especially when their killing occurs in a politically significant Muslim country. By the same token, abduction and forced conversion of Christians—even American citizens—to Islam is acceptable, at least as far as our government is concerned. According to *Our Sunday Visitor*, a Catholic newsweekly, that is what happened to two American girls in Saudi Arabia:

> Alia Al-Gheshayan will celebrate her 21st birthday on Jan. 5 in Saudi Arabia, half a world away from her American mother. Alia and her younger sister, Aisha, were born in California, but their Saudi father abducted them in 1986. Patricia Roush, the girls' mother, has only seen them once since they were seized. She says that during their captivity, these two girls, raised as Catholics, have been coerced into becoming Muslims. For nearly 14 years, Roush has tried to bring her children home. But, she argues, Saudi government intransigence and State Department ambivalence have resulted in little more than anguish. She recounts that from the very beginning a State Department representative told her, "Your children are gone. You'll never see them again. There's nothing we can do." . . . She shared with *Our Sunday Visitor* two unclassified State Department cables which discuss her daughters' adherence to Islam. One cable from the American consulate in Jeddah says, 'Alia has become a very good Moslem. She loves to study the Koran and pray.' . . . Despite these cases, a September 1999 State Department review of international religious freedom says of Saudi Arabia: "There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States."

While Patricia Roush is hoping and working for a happy resolution to her ordeal, she has written a book about her daughters. *Alia's Rainbow: Journey Through an International Kidnapping* was published through *www.buybooksontheweb.com* on January 5. It was her older daughter's 21st birthday. Hers is a genuine "human interest" story—and one, apparently, unfit for the mainstream media to print.

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The Trybe of Yvor

by R.S. Gwynn

"Poetry is the language of a state of crisis."
—Stéphane Mallarmé

The Selected Poems of Yvor Winters
by Yvor Winters
Edited by R.L. Barth
Athens: Ohio University Press;
129 pp., $14.95

The Poems of J.V. Cunningham
by J.V. Cunningham
Edited by Timothy Steele
Athens: Ohio University Press;
215 pp., $16.95

Collected Poems
by Edgar Bowers
New York: Alfred A. Knopf;
168 pp., $15.00

The Destructive Element: New and Selected Poems
by Turner Cassity
Athens: Ohio University Press;
246 pp., $15.95

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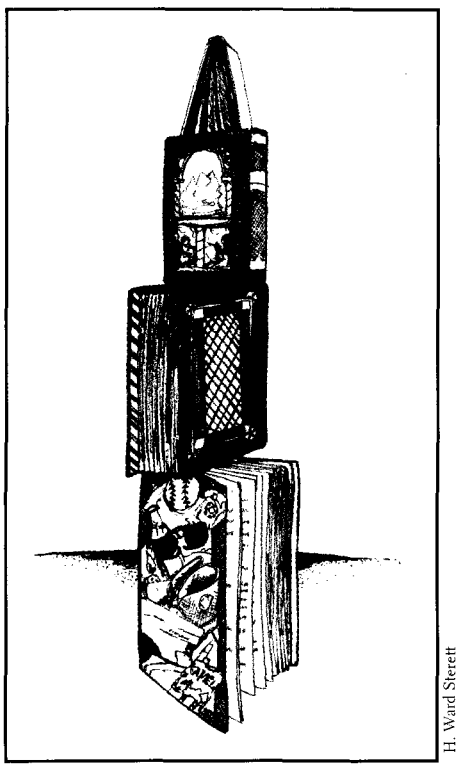

H. Ward Sterett

Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky's remembrance of his first day in class with a professor who—if his stubborn presence in the work of several generations of students and now even the students of those students is any measure—must have been one of the great teachers of the past century, runs as follows:

I will tell you something: I will tell you
What this course is about. Sometime in the middle
Of the Eighteenth Century, along with the rise
Of capitalism and scientific method, the logical
Foundations of Western thought decayed and fell apart.
When they fell apart, poets were left

With emotions and experiences, and with no way
To examine them. At this time, poets and men
Of genius began to go mad. Gray went mad. Collins

Went mad. Kit Smart was mad. William Blake surely
Was a madman. Coleridge was a drug addict, with severe
Depression. My friend Hart Crane died mad. My friend

Ezra Pound is mad. But you will not go mad; you will grow up

To become happy, sentimental old college professors,
Because they were men of genius, and you

Are not; and the ideas which were vital
to them are mere amusements to you. I will not
Go mad, because I have understood those ideas . . .

Yvor (rhymes with "diver") Winters (1900-1968) taught at Stanford for 40 years, during a time well before the teaching of poetry writing in universities became such an industry that, if we can project its exponential growth rate into the future, every man, woman, and child in America will possess a degree in creative writing by 2100. But for much of Winters' career, his Stanford poetry seminar was not just the only game in town but the only class in the craft of poetry in the western half of the country, with perhaps the sole exception of Iowa City.

By the fruits we know the tree: Pinsky, Robert Hass (another laureate), Philip Levine, Donald Hall, Thom Gunn, Robert Mezey, Donald Stanford, Charles Gullans, and three poets under discussion here—J.V. Cunningham, Turner Cassity, and Edgar Bowers—represent only a fraction of the host shaped by Winters, many of whom still betray his influence (and this is not to mention his estimable wife Janet Lewis, who survived him by 30 years). And the memoirs of his students' experiences have been equally revealing: Gunn, just arrived from England and short on funds, is immediately housed in Winters' backyard writing shack, a building that had 30 years earlier housed a destitute J.V. Cunningham; Hall, sensing that too much exposure to Prof. Svengali might leave him forever enthralled, decides to bail out after one

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R.S. Gwynn's No Word of Farewell: Poems 1970-2000 *will appear this year from Story Line Press. He has recently edited* New Expansive Poetry: Theory, Criticism, History.

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year, literally screaming "Geronimo!" as he leaves Palo Alto in his dust. Cassity lauds Winters' "granite integrity" and his genius for "response to the immediate." Bowers puts the lie to Winters-as-tyrant myths, speaking of the egalitarian spirit that ruled his classroom and stressing, in a letter to me, Winters' ability to excite younger poets to engage in a shared endeavor that does not fit the usual stereotype of poetic influence. Even Levine, whose working-class affectations have ranged far from his mentor's stance, adopts his voice for a typical aphorism: "Philip, we must never lie, / or we shall lose our souls."

Winters' personal influence as a teacher has remained strong, but his reputation as a critic and poet has not weathered the academic storms of recent years. The intellectual dominance of the New Critics, with whom he was usually (and more erroneously than not) connected, has waned in times when deconstruction and raceclassgender bean-counting have dominated academic approaches to poetry; nevertheless, Winters' self-chosen position as an outsider makes him a still-provocative advocate of poetry. His rejection of most aspects of modernism, his distrust of the romantic mode, his insistence on the "audible" sense of English meters, and his championing (which to me seems largely ill advised) of obscure figures like Fulke Greville, Jones Very, or Elizabeth Daryush set him apart as a fierce original. He had the foresight to appreciate Hart Crane's doomed attempts at creating an American poetry of epic scale, and he delighted in skewering the reputations of Poe, Whitman, and Frost, to name only three. His curious notion of poetry as a "moral evaluation" ran counter to the poem-as-object biases of the New Critics; on the other hand, his definition of "moral" embraced neither the shoddy dogmatism of 1930's Marxists nor the preachiness of the Victorians. Poetic morality, for Winters, meant the establishment of a balance between conceptual thought and the demands of the emotions, a sort of golden mean of poetical conduct that stressed *character* over personality (a strange notion indeed in our self-obsessed era). As he once noted:

> The basis of evil is emotion; Good rests in the power of rational selection in action, as a preliminary to which the emotion in any situation must be as far as possible eliminated, and, in so far as it cannot be eliminated, understood.

It should come as no surprise that one of his key works is titled *In Defense of Reason* or that he unreservedly saw himself as a classicist.

What, then, of Winters' own poetry? R.L. Barth's edition of *The Selected Poems of Yvor Winters*, with a helpful introduction by Helen Pinkerton Trimpi, supersedes several earlier attempts to collect his work (my own copy of the *Collected Poems* of 1960 is a much slimmer volume than the present one) and arranges the poetry chronologically. Oddly enough, Winters began as a late-blooming Imagist, repeating some of the Poundian experiments of the first decade of the century. "The Precincts of February" sounds like vintage H.D.:

> Junipers,
> Steely shadows,
> Floating the jay.
> A man,
>
> Heavy and ironblack,
> Alone in the sun,
> Threading the grass. . . .

Winters eventually came to regard this bare-bones technique as a dead end and turned to the metrical style, rhymed more often than not, that is characteristic of his mature work. In many ways, it is not an easy poetry to like, with many dry takes on mythical subjects and many more poems bearing the mustiness of the English department lounge. Winters' poetry is not devoid of sentiment, but it is remarkably free of the gestures toward an audience that both humanize and occasionally coarsen the work of his most successful contemporary, Robert Frost. Set something like Frost's blank-verse closet drama "Home Burial" beside Winters' epigrammatic "A Leave-Taking":

> I, who never kissed your head,
> Lay these ashes in their bed;
> That which I could do have done.
> Now farewell, my newborn son.

The third line here strikes me as pure Winters; its power is built on understatement and a couple of small turns of rhetoric, and, unlike most modernist poetry, there is not an image in sight.

If Winters is not a modernist in manner, he is paradoxically among the most modern of poets in his subject matter. Years before Auden and company were exhorting poets to "get the gasworks in," Winters was writing poems about air bases, military rifles, airport terminals, the wrecks of dirigibles, and the landscape of suburban California. "In Praise of California Wines," "John Sutter," and the memorable "Before Disaster" capture in poetry for the first time the multiple essences of a region that, through movies and television, most Americans now find at least as familiar as their own home turf. The last of these, written in 1932, captures one California innovation decades before it became ubiquitous: the modern freeway.

> Evening traffic homeward burns,
> Swift and even on the turns,
> Drifting weight in triple rows,
> Fixed relation and repose.
> This one edges out and by,
> Inch by inch with steady eye.
> But should error be increased,
> Mass and moment are released;
> Matter loosens, flooding blind,
> Levels drivers to its kind.

Winters knew the future when he saw it and knew the futility of romantic resistance to it; the poem concludes, "Treading change with savage heel, / We must live or die by steel."

In the early 17th century, Ben Jonson's influence on the younger poets who imbibed both his tavern stories and his classicism was such that Herrick, Suckling, Carew, and company proudly styled themselves "the tribe of Ben." Winters, who used to gather his students in his home for beer and the Friday Night Fights, exercised a comparable effect upon J.V. Cunningham (1911-1985), a sometime colleague at Stanford, and upon Edgar Bowers (who died as this essay was being completed) and Turner Cassity, who now reigns as the *éminence grise* of his literary line.

The Poems of J.V. Cunningham, scrupulously edited and annotated by Timothy Steele, a respected poet and metricist, collects the work of one of the century's finest miniaturists, a Martial to counterpoint Winters' Horace. Steele corrects a couple of generally accepted myths about the relationship of the two poets: Cunningham, who came to Stanford as a student at Winters' behest, never took a class from the older poet, and their relationship, while on the whole friendly, endured many strong differences of opinion. At his best, Winters is a poet who begins with strong specifics; his better po-

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ems draw on both geographical and historical locales before moving to the general plane. Cunningham, on the other hand, writes almost exclusively on the level of generalization. Winters once observed, "Cunningham is seldom perceptive of the physical universe around him; he does not know what to do with it"; still, Cunningham is one of the wittiest of all modern poets on sexual subjects, a realm that Winters barely acknowledges. Even though Winters identified himself as an anti-romantic, Cunningham felt that his own classicism, inclining toward plain statement and logical development, was of a much purer type than that of the older poet.

In the case of Cunningham's epigrams, one is simply tempted to quote them and let the matter rest. Here are two samples. The first is called "Original Sin":

The trouble with my ex-
 Was mostly sex.
The trouble with my new
 Is the to-do.
The trouble with them all
 Was Adam's fall.

Here lies my wife. Eternal peace
Be to us both with her decease.

Our squeamish contemporary taste may find these a bit misogynistic, but if Cunningham has any true peer it is probably Thurber, whom he resembles in many ways. True, a steady diet of this sort of thing is probably not conducive to good health, but stopping after two is like limiting oneself to a like number of peanuts. Cunningham's most famous poem is, I think, the great manifesto of a poet who takes pride in his minor status:

How time reverses
The proud in heart!
I now make verses
Who aimed at art.
But I sleep well.
Ambitious boys
Whose big lines swell
With spiritual noise,

Despise me not,
And be not queasy
To praise somewhat:
Verse is not easy.

But rage who will.
Time that procured me
Good sense and skill
Of madness cured me.

Edgar Bowers (1924-2000) and Turner Cassity (b. 1929) represent two aspects of Winters' legacy, and I regret that I lack the space to do them full honors here. Bowers, who won the Bollingen prize in 1989, is a strong narrative poet who usually works in a blank verse line of pure authority. I say this as one who has carried several of his poems' openings in memory for the better part of 40 years: "I come to tell you that my son is dead. / Americans have shot him as a spy" ("The Prince"). His instincts are elegiac and pastoral, and he is at his best evoking the Georgia landscapes of his youth (in "Elegy: Walking the Line") and in summoning up the Europe of the end of World War II and the immediate postwar era, when he served in occupied Bavaria. Two of the book's new poems are set in Bavaria: "Clear-seeing," an encounter with a clairvoyant and her Wehrmacht major-general husband, and "Clothes," which describes the suicide of a German woman who succumbs to terror after she admits, on a routine visa questionnaire, that she served as a clerk for the Gestapo. As Bowers inspects the corpse, he has an unexpected reaction:

Bent over as if taken by a cramp,
I sobbed out loud and, on my uniform,
Vomited up my lunch—over the tie,
The polished buttons and insignia,
The little strips of color and the green
Eisenhower jacket with its Eagle patch,
The taut pants in a crease, the glistening jump-boots—
Vomiting and still sobbing, like a child
Awakened in the night, and sick.
 Wegner and Hans
Held me, murmuring, "Ach, dear sir, the war
Is over and not over, such things happen."

Is over and not over. For this poet, who speaks so well for the war-time experiences of his generation, I doubt if it ever shall be.

Cassity, who has described himself as one of Winters' "wilder" students, is a quirky satirist whose subjects range from "The New Dolores Leather Bar" ("The leather creaks; studs shine; the chain mail jingles. / Shoulders act as other forms of bangles / In a taste where push has come to shove") to the wooden-legged Sarah Bernhardt impersonating Napoleon to an elegy for the last Ziegfeld girl.

Cassity, who has obviously traveled widely both in books and out of them (he was for years a librarian at Emory University), has an eye for the outrageous and an appetite for the bizarre. I am tempted to agree with Dana Gioia's assessment that he is "the most brilliantly eccentric poet in America," but I would hope that the obvious attractions of his Ripley's Believe-It-or-Not approach to poetry do not completely overshadow the rare (and often toxic) beauties his poetry can reveal. He is at his best in "Berlin-to-Baghdad," an account of a German diver going down in the waters off Seraglio Point in the Constantinople of 1876. What he finds discarded in the depths becomes a metaphor for what "all his crewmen, and the sultanate / Of all the world have each in his own way / Numbered, bagged, and tossed." It is an underwater garden of discarded members of the harem:

 In front of him,
As if enormous tulips sprouted heads,
A score of women, sewn-up to the neck
In weighted canvas bags, and with their hair
Threading the current as it steadics, move
From side to side like Humpty-Dumpstresses.

I still recall first encountering this poem in the *Sewanee Review* over a decade ago. By the time I reached the end, my jaw was literally hanging open.

With the current renewal of interest in formalist poetry, it may well be that Winters' legacy will prove more congenial to the present century than to the one just past. If readers of the next decades begin to see much of modernism as yet one more mistake fostered by a century of blood and error, then the clarity and balance that became dogma for this poet and text for his followers may ultimately be seen as less a detour from the main highway of literary history than as an inviting alternate route. c

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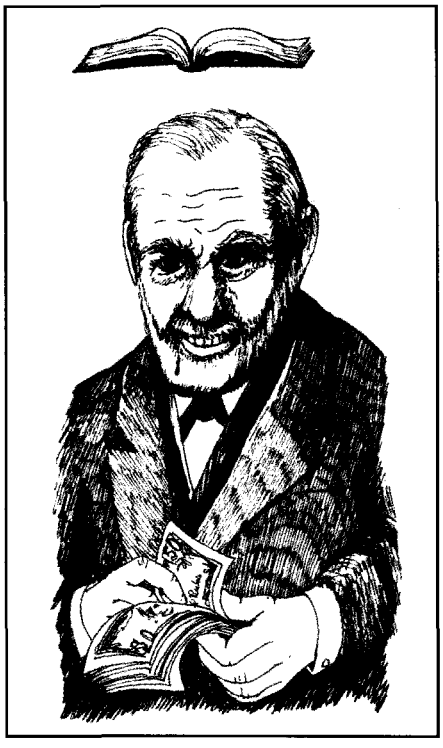
Freud With Teeth

by Andrei Navrozov

"No evil is greater than anarchy."

—A Latin Proverb



H. Ward Sterett

Hannibal
by Thomas Harris
New York: Delacorte;
484 pp., $27.95

◆

With author's fees in eight figures and print runs to match, Thomas Harris's cannibal is what publishers call a phenomenon. "I should've written that!" agonize America's ambitious housewives on their way to becoming failed writers. "I can't believe that this is what people want to read," murmur intellectual snobs on their way to becoming nothing in particular. "Why, it's actually quite good," equivocate the rest of Harris's readers, "and besides, who says that if something's popular it's got to be trash? What about the Beatles?" But the initial success, and now the triumphant return, of Dr. Hannibal Lecter is more curious than the debate, familiar as the cover of an airport novel, among turbid envy, impotent snobbery, and placid egalitarianism.

Dr. Lecter psychoanalyzes the people he meets, finds them morally inadequate, and then eats them. The plot having been thus dispensed with, there is now more space to examine what millions of Harris's fans actually find in his homicidal yarns, and the unexpected truth that is their social and political message.

In the company of my Russian friends, conversations, obsessively and to the exclusion of women and song, are always about Joseph Stalin. We admire Stalin as a kind of Beethoven or Goethe of power, we ponder his Napoleonic deeds and Mephistophelian tricks like musicologists studying an original score, and in so doing we follow and preserve our culture, for so did Pasternak ponder them, and so did Bulgakov, and so did our fathers and grandfathers. Understanding Stalin, to us, is what finding Troy was for Schliemann.

After many years of such discussions, a broad premise has emerged, namely, that every man alive has more enemies than he has friends, with the statistically valid conclusion that, should some great elemental force begin exterminating one's compatriots at random, there will be fewer people to curse it than to praise its name. Of course, like one's friends, one's actual enemies are the palpable extreme in the average person's field of experience. More to the point, there are a lot of people out there one vaguely dislikes, people who may be richer or more handsome, less educated or more educated, lazier or more industrious, with darker or lighter skin, with a stricter view of the family, with dubious personal habits, with scary guns, with funny wigs, with money in Switzerland. Kill them, and you will make those who dislike them very happy indeed, provided you do the killing fairly, randomly, disinterestedly: Kill them as the plague kills, in a festival of blind pandemic annihilation, and they will bless you as the Scourge of God.

As London was burning in 1666, many onlookers from every class of society, including those who stood to lose most by the fire, were seized by a kind of manic glee at the sight of that wondrous thing, a collective calamity. Each man was willing to exchange his personal fortune for the amalgamated misfortune of the others, many of whom, presumably, he thought he had reason to dislike. Thus did many in Europe welcome the events of 1789 in France, and every turn of the bloody wheel thereafter. Thus did the Russian intelligentsia hail Stalin's ukase of 1932 "On the Restructuring of Cultural Organizations," signaling that the time had come to oppress their Bolshevik oppressors, with the words "Christ is risen!"

Americans have not experienced totalitarianism, more wondrous by far than the Great Fire, and I detect its mesmeric gleaming, and hear its elemental roar, in the phenomenally successful offering of Thomas Harris. More distinctly, too, I should add, than in the mountains of books and magazine articles piled up over seven decades by those whom *Pravda* used to call fellow travelers, repre-

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sentatives of all progressive mankind, and friends of the Soviet Union, and the *New York Times* still calls writers.

Embracing the totalitarian temptation, with its sweet chaos of hopes and longings centered on human sacrifice, may have been the fashionable thing, the prudent thing, the "done" thing in America, but it never used to mean big bucks. With the advent of Hannibal Lecter, it is for the first time a commercial phenomenon, a seductive invitation to every citizen to take the law, decrepit and morally corrupt, into his own hands (or teeth if more convenient) and kill, or at least torture and maim, anyone he dislikes for whatever reason. Anarchic subjectivity, it turns out, is the stuff of popular dreams, and Brecht's pirate song is democracy's millennial anthem.

The phenomenon itself, then, is brand new. But the means employed in its creation are as worn as the grooves of our grandparents' gramophone records, and therein lies the book's weakness, if not actually some hope for the country. For the means are, once again, "European culture" as revealed to a bumbling and pompous nerd, an American provincial who appears to know no language save English and thinks decadence and refinement is eating white truffles and using scented soap. If *Hannibal* had been airbrushed free of these hilariously obvious defects, I wager that its publication would have created a scandal a thousand times more vicious than that of *The Satanic Verses* of Salman Rushdie. Equally, it is only a matter of time before some new Harris—his ear keen enough not to turn to *Grove* when writing about music, his perfumer's nose as sure as his Latin, his eye on his Marx, and his feet squarely planted in the heritage of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Spengler, Huysmans, Brecht, Mayakovsky, and the rest of the great European egomaniacs—really gives America what it seems to be longing for.

As it is, what we get is some Freud in paperback, Florence cribbed from a tourist guide, soap from the Farmacia di Santa Maria Novella, white truffles, Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Stephen Hawking on chaos theory, and a ferocious aquarium eel, along with ethnographic impossibilities such as the Italian conversation in which a pickpocket feels insulted when a police officer refers to her infant son as "it." As any first-year student will confirm, this politically correct piece of psychological nonsense cannot work in Italian for reasons of grammar. Consider this Florentine dialogue, with special attention to its Hollywood cadence:

> "Could you find Gnocco?" Pazzi snorted air through his nose. "*Senti*, get your things together, you can pick up your fake arm at the property room in three months, or sometime next year. The baby will have to go to the foundling hospital. The old woman can call on it there."
>
> "*IT*? Call on *IT*, *Commendatore*? His name is—" She shook her head, not wanting to say the child's name to this man.

And if Harris were to argue that this is a meaningless nuance, that I am nit-picking, I would reply that on such nuances the future of democracy in America has come to depend. Listen, I would say, get your things together, and let me tell you what Stalin used to do with moral subjectivists like you. c

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From the Valley of Saying

by Paul Lake

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its saying where executives
Would never want to tamper . . .
—W.H. Auden
"In Memory of W.B. Yeats"

A dagger and a poem: sword and pen
Proverbially paired beneath his head,
Great Alexander slept, the fever-dream
Of Homer's epic peopling his sleep
With Greek and Trojan action-figures till,
Arising from his bed, he left the deep
Valley of mere saying with his men
And landed on the plains of Ilium
To blaze new chapters of an *Iliad*
Across their length in Greek and Asian blood.

And when his battle-weary army balked
On India's plains, the all-conquering king,
To quell their mutinous mutterings, turned back
To plot new marches in a fresh campaign
To mix all men as in a loving-cup—
Though not before life imitated art
And like the hero of his bedtime book
The boy-king stormed off to his tent and sulked
Over spoils lost and curbs on his domain.

Inflamed by Homer's words and images,
Three continents were fired in the kiln
Of one imagination till they held
Neither Greek nor Jew, Persian nor Scythian,
As, learning Greek or taking Eastern wives,
All men were married in one brotherhood
Beneath the kingship of one lord and God.
The logos walked with Christian, Stoic, Jew
Down valleys where effete executives
Maintained their little stretch of Roman road,
Collected taxes, and in off hours read
St. Paul or Plutarch, Homer or Hesiod
To salt the tasteless tedium of their lives.

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The Sacred Garden

by W. Wesley McDonald

Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind
by James E. Person, Jr.
Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books; 249 pp., $26.95

◆

While Russell Kirk (1918-1994) has been widely recognized as a formative figure in the postwar conservative revival, his reputation has undergone dramatic changes since the publication of his magisterial *The Conservative Mind* in 1953. In the 1950's, *Newsweek* and *Time* hailed the young scholar as "one of the foremost intellectual spokesmen for the conservative position" and a "gifted" writer. His books were favorably reviewed in respected and widely circulated publications. Yet his treatment during the following decades by the establishment press and publishers was far less sympathetic; his articles and books received scant or dismissive attention outside conservative circles. Kirk "was well on his way, in the 1950's, to becoming one of America's great literary celebrities," but by 1985, as Thomas Fleming noted, it "would be unusual to find him mentioned in the *New Republic*, much less the *Nation*." Although Ronald Reagan saluted him in 1981 as one of the "intellectual leaders" who had helped to make the 1980 conservative electoral victories possible, Kirk played only a slight role in the Reagan presidency, which brought neoconservatism to power. Largely ignored by the Washington-based Republican establishment, his opinions on public-policy issues were seldom solicited. His anti-modernist traditionalism, combined with his characteristically unfashionable attire, seemed out of place among the button-down Republicans of the Reagan era.

James E. Person, Jr., senior editor at the Gale Group, is eminently qualified to write Russell Kirk's intellectual biography. A close confidant of the family who lived for a time at Piety Hill (Kirk's ancestral residence), Person enjoyed extensive access to his subject during the last years of Kirk's life. He assisted Kirk in researching his memoirs, *The Sword of Imagination*, and edited *The Unbought Grace of Life*, a collection of essays written in honor of Kirk and presented to him shortly before his death. Person helped sort and catalog Kirk's voluminous correspondence and made use of his 10,000-volume personal library while it was still intact. A published literary critic, Person evaluates Kirk's fiction and short stories more thoroughly than any previous commentator had done. For this alone, his book represents a signal contribution to Kirk scholarship.

Born in Plymouth, Michigan, on October 19, 1918, the son of a railroad engineer, Kirk spent most of his early summers in central Michigan, among the "clannish Pierces" (as he referred to his mother's family), in the tiny village of Mecosta. After a stint in the service during World War II, Kirk accepted the post of assistant professor of history at Michigan State University. While there, he took a leave of absence to pursue doctoral work at the University of St. Andrews. That ancient Scottish institution conferred upon him in 1952 the degree of Doctor of Letters, making him the only American to have received its highest arts degree. His doctoral dissertation, *The Conservative Rout*, was re-titled *The Conservative Mind* and published by Henry Regnery to widespread critical acclaim. Shortly afterward, Kirk resigned from the faculty of Michigan State to embark on a career as an independent "man of letters." For the remainder of his life, he would earn his keep almost entirely by his pen. His total literary output includes 32 books; 800 essays, book reviews, and articles; and more than 3,000 newspaper and magazine pieces. In addition, Kirk founded *Modern Age* (which he edited for several years) and the *University Bookman* (which he edited until his death), and wrote both a syndicated newspaper column and a biweekly one for *National Review*.

Kirk's work spanned a broad range of topics and interests, including political theory, intellectual history, and social, cultural, and literary criticism. He authored numerous supernatural and horror short stories and three novels. He lectured and wrote on education and economic matters, and at the end of his life was planning a long study of law and justice. Person states in his preface that his intention is to demonstrate "*the extent* to which there was an undergirding unity of worldview that informs all [Kirk's] work." By examining the moral imagination, the contract of eternal society, and man's flawed nature—central concepts of Kirk's thought—Person shows how these various, apparently disparate enterprises fit into a coherent intellectual whole.

Person considers Kirk to be "one of the greatest minds this nation has produced during the twentieth century." Although he admits to making "no secret of his admiration of him," "that admiration," he adds, "is *not* uncritical." Nevertheless, this biography is the portrait of Kirk as he would have liked to be remembered. Person does note that, in a quarrel with the Straussians over the Declaration of Independence, Kirk got his historical facts wrong. (Despite Kirk's assertions to the contrary, Thomas Jefferson was proud of his authorship of the Declaration.) He regards Kirk's claim that Lincoln was a conservative as "shaky," but fails to explain sufficiently. Having presented Kirk's views on natural law, he fails to note that Kirk made only tentative stabs in the direction of classical natural law theory. (Rather, he held that moral universals spring from the imagination—not from reason, as the natural law theorist would hold.) Moreover, Person does not examine the problems presented by Kirk's appeal to tradition. Often, Kirk displayed in his thought an ahistorical attachment to the past: History became for him almost a sacred garden into which new categories of experience were only reluctantly admitted.

During the 1950's and 60's, Kirk and other conservative thinkers made impressive contributions to social and political thought. By the 1980's, such matters were set on the back burner while movement conservatives pursued personal power and prestige in Washington. Newt Gingrich, the Reaganites, and other establishment conservatives were not particularly interested in Kirk because his ideas were not perceived as relevant to their policy goals. Kirk did not praise the free market uncritically; he supported tariffs to protect the small farmer; he deplored the ruinous destruction of the environment wrought by corporate greed and commercial excess. Person cites ap-

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provingly Lee Edwards' claim that the Heritage Foundation "rests securely on the ideas of Kirk, Hayek and Weaver." I am not sure which of Kirk's ideas Edwards has in mind: I can't think of many to which the policy analysts at Heritage consistently appeal.

In any event, Russell Kirk's achievement cannot be measured by his influence on transient policy issues. Kirk will—or should—be remembered for championing those enduring norms of social interaction without which civilized existence is rendered impossible. Without the guidance of these "permanent things" (a favorite phrase of Kirk's), order in the soul and in the commonwealth quickly evaporates. He reminds us that, if conservatism is to survive at all, conservatives need to think about what it is they are trying to conserve. Person's book provides a readable introduction to a man of extraordinary imagination, insight, grace, and character.

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Reflections in Print

by John Attarian

Perfect Sowing:
Reflections of a Bookman
by Henry Regnery
Edited by Jeffrey Nelson
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books;
394 pp., $24.95

◆

Henry Regnery (1912-1996), as Jeffrey Nelson observes in his introduction, was "one of the unsung heroes of the last half-century of American cultural life." Henry Regnery Company (now Regnery Publishing, Inc.), which he founded in 1947, gave America's nascent conservative movement a beachhead in the monolithically liberal publishing world: The breakthrough was the publication of Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, which Regnery deemed "the high point of my publishing career." He also published James Burnham, Richard Weaver, and other conservative giants. As the leading publisher of revisionist histories of World War II, Regnery effectively disputed liberalism's effort to prune truth into a self-serving "official" version of events. Defending civilization on another front, he published many works of classical and Catholic thought.

As this second posthumous collection of his writings (the first, *A Few Reasonable Words*, was published by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute in 1996) reminds us, there was another side to Henry Regnery: the accomplished essayist and reviewer. These pieces—many of them originally published in *Modern Age*, others making a first appearance here—reveal the quality of Regnery's prose style (lucid, vigorous, but never strident) as well as the depth and breadth of his mind. Spanning the period from 1969 to 1994, their subjects range from memoirs of his father and his upbringing to books and authors (some of whom he published); higher education in America and Germany; major contributors to culture in Chicago, such as University of Chicago president Robert M. Hutchins and architect Louis Sullivan; philosophy and religion; and publishing.

Reflecting the book's title, kernels of discernment and wisdom lie thick on the pages. Regnery traces the decline of higher education to liberals' presumption in turning universities into society's problem-solvers. Regarding the contemporary moral climate, he observes that "licentiousness is only a sign of a much deeper disorder, a loss of faith"; the state of modern literature he attributes to the fact that many modern novels "are written for people whose mental horizons are strongly influenced, if not determined, by television." His account of his innocent upbringing, close-knit neighborhood, and demanding education in Hinsdale, Illinois, reveals how much America has lost since then—that "change is not always progress, nor greater convenience necessarily an improvement in the human condition." Regnery offers concise but richly informative introductions to the thought of Wyndham Lewis, Whittaker Chambers, and Catholic theologian Romano Guardini, and to the life and work of poet Roy Campbell.

This superb collection is no mere miscellany; unifying themes and patterns emerge. One is Regnery's celebration of exemplars of heroic, civilized men—men combining vitality and integrity, who stood by their beliefs, grappled robustly with life, loved it dearly, and lived it fully, making the most of their situations and meeting adversity manfully. He gives us his father William, "a disciplined, mature man" before he was 20, then a keen businessman, principled employer, and wonderful father; young Russell Kirk, seizing every chance to write and publish; Lewis, "who lived in his time with all the intensity of his mind and personality" while battling those who set its trend and tone, standing firm despite unpopularity, blindness, and poverty. Regnery lauds Sullivan's autobiography for "the sense it conveys of [the author's] having lived his life to the full, of having taken advantage of its opportunities, and met its challenges," and salutes Campbell for his willingness to risk his life and reputation for causes in which he believed.

Regnery's abiding, penetrating concern was for publishing and its impact on society for good or evil. The publisher's power to select manuscripts, Regnery keenly observes, enables him to influence what is read, hence to affect his time's ideas and literary standards. Simultaneously, he must be a savvy businessman. The serious publisher "walks a narrow path: if he ignores the demands of the market he risks bankruptcy, and if he succumbs to them entirely he sacrifices his own integrity." In the past, publishers have made superb contributions—such as the Folio Edition of Shakespeare's plays—to literature. Today, by contrast, we see "the publisher at his destructive worst," bombarding the public with smutty books. For this, Regnery rightly holds the industry ultimately responsible—although it is abetted, as he points out, by the book-reviewing establishment and affiliated institutions such as the Book of the Month Club.

While keenly critical of modernity and the liberal errors driving it, Henry Regnery refuses to despair. Having given a chilling account of liberalism's power to shape public opinion, he looks hopefully to a new generation perhaps more aware of liberalism's flaws. History's course, Regnery reminds us, "is determined by people, by men and women of flesh and blood. If we don't like the present state of affairs, it is within our power to change it." To Lewis's warning in 1947 of the "threat of extinction" to the Western tradition, he adds:

> The threat of extinction is now much greater than it was then: those bent on destroying civilization are better organized, and the defenses are weaker. To do what is

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needed to halt the disintegration of our society requires purpose and intelligence. There won't be any money or glory in it, but we have inherited a great and noble tradition, and it is worth fighting for.

As a publisher *and* as an author, Henry Regnery fought gallantly for the civilization he loved until his death. In this learned and rewarding book, we have an enduring testament to the nature and magnitude of his achievement, and of our loss.

John Attarian writes from Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The Newspaper West

by Bill Croke

Flint's Honor
by Richard S. Wheeler
New York: Forge Books; 320 pp., $23.95

◆

In *Flint's Honor*, Richard Wheeler has painted a realistic portrait of life in a Colorado mining town, with special emphasis on the importance of newspapers in the civic life of the frontier West.

Sam Flint (a character continuing to develop from two earlier Wheeler novels) is an idealistic newspaperman first drawn to raucous Silver City (a town in a gulch "two miles long and three yards wide") after reading a vicious account of a young prostitute's suicide written by Digby Westminster, editor and publisher of the Silver City *Democrat*. Appalled, Flint resolves to take his printing press to Silver City to start up a rival newspaper, one that will champion—among other things—reforms intended to spread the tax burden more fairly, to the relief of the denizens of the town's "sporting district" who presently carry it.

In elite academic circles, Westerns are condemned as subliterate pabulum for celebrating self-reliance in a contemporary world of victims, yet they remain—with the exception of the mystery-detective novel—the only really plot-driven fiction still published. Considered this way, the Western has more in common with classic American fiction than with the ideologically trendy and vacuous postmodern American writing prevalent today. I find it odd that Dashiell Hammett's and Raymond Chandler's *noir* classics are now popular in the academy, but Walter van Tilburg Clark's and Owen Wister's books are not, except as examples by which to disparage the "myth" of the West. (Wallace Stegner, for instance, thought *The Virginian* to be at best a "literate horse opera.")

Sam Flint drives his wagon, loaded with printing press, into Silver City. He reluctantly rents space (there is no other available) in a brothel from Chastity Ford, a stereotypical prostitute with a heart of gold, and begins to publish the Silver City *Sentinel* with the idea of competing with the corrupt Westminster, a man described as "the brethren of rattlesnakes."

Wheeler crafts fine sentences full of vivid imagery and detail. He possesses the narrative gift, and his knowledge of the history and culture of the American West is first rate. Wheeler knows how his fictional milieu looks, right down to the saloons dug into the side of a mountain. What mars an otherwise good novel is what mars every Western: The characters are usually no more than the clichéd cardboard cutouts, their lives reeking of melodrama, that populate a thousand Hollywood Westerns. The novelistic Western is often a cinematic parody.

Flint struggles against the odds to get his paper off the ground. He has to contend with the disruptive machinations of Westminster, who has locked up the ad market and who editorializes relentlessly against the new "Bawdyhouse Bugle." And Flint takes on the powers-that-be, the slimy Balthazars—Achilles and his son Hamlin—the owners of the Silver Queen, the mine that made the town. Flint's crusade for better wages and working conditions for miners, and his publishing ads from other mines in Colorado that offer such, rocks Silver City's municipal boat. He also makes an enemy of Sheriff Drew Poindexter, the hackneyed corrupt lawman who takes his orders from the moneyed interests and persecutes those not handy with a bribe.

Chastity Ford takes a liking to the chaste Flint and tries, subtly but continually, to seduce him, offering her services free of charge. Flint—a paragon of moral and civic virtue—as constantly resists her charms. But a mutual respect develops between them, and when he and his hired printer witness her brutal murder at the hands of Hamlin Balthazar, the killing reinforces his determination to clean up Silver City. And so a convoluted, though plausible, plot goes forward.

Wheeler's knowledge of frontier newspapering is formidable. One has the impression that he could publish a paper using a rotary flatbed press. He is familiar with the laundry list of dirty tricks employed in 19th-century newspaper wars, from beating up rival newsboys to pieing an editor's type. Familiar in the trade was the "gypsy" or "tramp" printer, usually a semi-learned young man whose itinerant life kept him crisscrossing the West and working for various papers, never knowing where his next dollar or drink was coming from. In *Flint's Honor*, the role is played by Jude Napolean. As Flint and Napolean ("the bantam printer") wage their newspaper war, they employ all the tricks available to intelligent and desperate underdogs—including printing the *Sentinel* in a neighboring town when the Balthazars seize the press in lieu of rent—in a thinking-on-their-feet enterprise that drives the book to its conclusion.

While returning from their press, Flint and Napolean are waylaid by the fugitive Hamlin Balthazar, who seeks to dispose of the two witnesses to his murderous act. But they gain the upper hand and deliver Balthazar to a chastened Sheriff Poindexter (who foresees that Flint's dogged *Sentinel* will eventually prevail). Digby Westminster—losing his subscribers and ad revenue to Flint—steals away in the middle of the night, leaving the *Sentinel* Silver City's sole paper. At book's end, Flint sets up his press in a new location and hires as an assistant Livia Bridge—one of his few initial supporters—who we are led to believe will be Flint's future wife. Jude Napolean moves on to the next paper, leaving Flint to muse that, "Whoever Jude Napolean was, he seemed a miracle . . . Now he [Flint] believed in miracles . . . "

Flint's Honor suffers from the melodrama of even the best Westerns. But it is so well written, and has such a first-rate plot, that in the end it is a novel not only for connoisseurs of the Western but of the novel as a literary form.

Bill Croke writes from Cody, Wyoming.

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by Samuel Francis

The Hispanic Strategy

The question that has smoldered in the Republican mind for the last couple of years is not who will be the presidential nominee of the party in 2000, but rather, will George W. Bush win the Hispanic vote? Since some time in 1998, it has been an unquestioned assumption of many, if not most, Republicans—at least those who count inside the Beltway and the inner sanctum of the party—that Governor Bush will be the nominee, that he will win the election, and that—unlike Bob Dole or any other Republican candidate in history—he will carry a majority of Hispanics.

As often happens with Republican thought processes, these beliefs have been less the result of logical cogitation based on firm factual evidence than of what the party faithful would like to be true. The belief that Mr. Bush will win the Hispanic vote is closely connected to the passionate enthusiasm of most libertarians and neoconservatives for virtually uncontrolled immigration and their equally passionate hatred of anyone who suggests restricting immigration. If Mr. Bush can win Hispanics, you see, then permitting and even encouraging the massive Hispanic invasion of the United States during the last 30 years has not been an act of political suicide for the GOP and the soft-right gurus who advocated it but a stroke of political sagacity; Republican candidates who based their campaigns on appeals to Hispanics would have mobilized a new political base that the older right never had. It would also mean that the Republican failure to win more Hispanics, at least in recent years, was not due to any leftish leanings of the good folk from south of the border but to misguided efforts by some Republicans to restrict immigration. Governor Bush, the argument concludes, has remained conspicuously aloof from immigration restriction, and his reward is the massive Hispanic support that he will surely enjoy.

For once, what Republicans would like to be true may actually be true. Mr. Bush may really win Hispanic votes, but if he does, it will be because he has assiduously courted and pandered to them, at the expense of conservative principles and strategies that have been central to the identity—and the political success—of the Republican Party since the 1970's. But it is by no means assured that he will win an Hispanic majority at all, and much of the conservative ballyhoo about his ability to do so is based on nothing more than myth.

The main myth about Mr. Bush and the Hispanic vote is that in his 1998 re-election campaign as governor of Texas, he won a majority of Hispanics. The myth has been bruited about in conservative circles for two years, and at the end of last year broke into print in the *Washington Times*. On December 20, Donald Lambro, chief political reporter for the paper, wrote that Mr. Bush "pulled in more than 50 percent of the Hispanic vote in Texas in his 1998 re-election." Two weeks later, on January 4, the paper's other chief political reporter, Ralph Z. Hallow, wrote that Mr. Bush had carried "an unprecedented 49 percent of their [Hispanic] vote in his re-election as governor." The two reported vote counts are clearly contradictory, but the truth is that one of them is certainly, and the other may be, inaccurate.

Writing in the *Weekly Standard* on March 1, 1999, California pro-immigration activist Ron Unz reported that Mr. Bush "recently captured nearly half the Mexican-American vote in his landslide re-election victory." *National Review* reported in its issue of March 8, 1999, that a "new look at November exit polls suggests Bush didn't carry 49 percent of [the] Hispanic vote as supporters claim, but 39 percent." That figure seems to have caught on with some analysts; the *San Francisco Chronicle*, in an article carried by the *Washington Times* on September 1, credited Mr. Bush with "winning nearly 40 percent" of the Hispanic vote in 1998. The authoritative *Almanac of American Politics, 2000* reports that, while exit polls at the time of the election showed Governor Bush taking some 49 percent of the Hispanic vote, subsequent polls "showed him winning 39% of Hispanics statewide." The *Almanac* claims it was "an impressive showing," since Texas Hispanics have been Democrats for decades. But it might not be quite as impressive as a first glance suggests. Bush's opponent ran a weak race, and the governor himself concentrated on winning Hispanics, not only avoiding support for immigration restriction but also all but endorsing bilingual education, which even pro-immigration neoconservatives like Unz and Linda Chavez oppose.

Assuming he really won 39 percent rather than the "more than 50 percent" with which conservative folklore and Mr. Lambro credit him, that puts him within range of Ronald Reagan's and Richard Nixon's performances among Hispanic voters nationally. According to exit polls published by the *New York Times* soon after the 1996 election, Nixon in 1972 won 35 percent of Hispanics nationally and Reagan carried 33 percent in 1980 and 37 percent in 1984.

Bob Dole's miserable showing of 21 percent Hispanic support in 1996 kicked off the Republican flight from immigration reform. Writers like Unz, Chavez, and the *Wall Street Journal*'s Paul Gigot have blamed Dole's poor Hispanic returns on Republican support for California's Proposition 187, which sought to deny illegal aliens public welfare. But the argument is really not very persuasive, for several reasons. In the first place, Mr. Dole had very little record himself on immigration issues one way or another, and after winning the nomination he immediately repudiated the party's platform plank on immigration control. His running mate, Jack Kemp, was strongly pro-immigration and had actually earned Republican wrath for opposing Prop. 187 at the last, crucial minute in 1994. There was virtually nothing in the 1996 Republican ticket that suggested support for immigration restriction or risked alienating Hispanic voters (assuming that immigration restriction does alienate Hispanic voters; in fact, polls have shown that Hispanics are generally almost as supportive of restriction as non-Hispanics).

But the clincher in the counter-argument that Prop. 187 had virtually nothing to do with Dole's slippage among Hispanics is that in 1992—two years before Prop. 187 was on the ballot—President Bush won only some 25 percent of the

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Hispanic vote. Both candidates' showings were probably due not so much to the actual record of the candidates on immigration issues as to the generally lackluster campaigns that the candidates mounted. President Bush and Senator Dole lost Hispanics for the same reason they lost most other voters—they were simply bad candidates.

But another likely reason for the decline of Hispanic support for Republicans is the consolidation in recent years of an Hispanic bloc, mobilized by left-wing organizations like the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and similar groups. Such left-wing lobbies gain power from immigration and want it continued and even increased, and they are increasingly radical and anti-white in their rhetoric and political-racial appeals. The Clinton administration, and particularly Al Gore, have worked closely with these lobbies for the explicit purpose of mobilizing votes for left-liberal Democrats.

But the emergence of a radical Hispanic bloc does not mean that the votes it delivers can't be dropped on the Republican doorstep as well. Indeed, Hispanic activists would be foolish to emulate the black "civil rights" power structure by locking themselves into a single party. Their goal should be to make both parties as dependent on them and their bloc as possible, and Governor Bush's own record on Hispanics as well as the response of some Hispanic leaders to him suggests that may be happening.

The governor makes much of campaigning in Spanish and using Spanish-language ads, as well as boasting of his earlier record of opposing immigration restrictions, supporting bilingual education, and staging photo ops with Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo and Mexican governors across the Texas border. The Texas governor has also opposed using U.S. troops to protect the border from *illegal* immigration and has refused to take action against the Texas border town of El Cenizo, which last year enacted an ordinance forbidding cooperation with state and federal immigration authorities. The town's law is an open violation of federal law and an open declaration that it will not enforce border security against illegal entries. To date, Governor Bush has done and said nothing either to bring this town into line with Texas and federal law or to indicate what action, as president, he would take against it.

As for immigration itself, earlier this year the governor announced that he not only opposes efforts to curb it but believes "we ought to increase legal immigration for our country's advantage. The high-tech world we are now dominating is dependent on educated folks, but we're short . . . of workers." Repeating his opposition to using troops on the border, he told editors of the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* in January, "Forget it. Mexico's our neighbor and friend." Mr. Bush's remarks, like those of most adherents of the "universal nation" ideology, ignore the fact that most Mexican immigrants are not highly "educated folks" and that Mexico, so far from being our "friend," is an empire of gangsters, drug-pushers, and murderers who encourage emigration to rid their country of deadbeats, criminals, and troublemakers they would otherwise have to lock up or kill. The governor told the newspaper "we ought to get rid of illegal immigration, illegal drugs, illegal contraband," but he said absolutely nothing about how "we" can do so or what he would do as president to accomplish those goals.

It therefore should not be too surprising that Mexican-American leaders generally like George W. Bush, and Mr. Lambro in his *Washington Times* article quoted favorable remarks about the governor made by officials of LULAC and the Hispanic racist organization, the National Council of La Raza. As long as Republicans abandon immigration control, refuse to use military force to protect the nation against the Mexican invasion, purport that Mexico is really "our friend" (the *Wall Street Journal* last year reported that Mr. Bush had asked a Mexican newspaper to refer to him as "Mexico's best friend across the border"), support bilingual education, and condone the refusal of Hispanics to assimilate by addressing them in Spanish rather than English, there's no reason why Hispanic bloc leaders can't support Republicans as much as they do Democrats.

What the Stupid Party has begun to discover is the simple political principle, known to demagogues since the last days of the Roman Republic, that if you feed the voters what they want, they'll probably give you their votes. Having learned that principle by giving up immigration control in order to win the support of a radical left-wing ethnic bloc, the party is now applying it not only to the political positions it takes but also to the actual candidates it fields. Rep. Bob Dornan's famous line—shortly before he lost to a candidate who emphasized her Hispanic name and background—that "I want to see America stay a nation of immigrants, and if we lose our Northern European stock—your coloring and mine, blue eyes and fair hair—tough!" has been taken almost literally by the top strategist for the California GOP, State Sen. Jim Brulte. Last year, Mr. Brulte exulted that "My leadership PAC will give no more money to Anglo males in Republican primaries. Every dollar I can raise is going to nominate Latinos and Asian Americans and women. We have to expand our outreach." More recently, the *Washington Times* quoted Lance Tarrance, a pollster for the GOP, as saying, "We have now moved from the Southern strategy we pursued for the last three decades, since Richard Nixon, to a Hispanic strategy for the next three decades." It does not occur to stupidos like Mr. Brulte and Mr. Tarrance that they are also abandoning the very ethnic, regional, and social core of their own party, as well as the beliefs that distinguished it from the parties of the hard left.

Nor does it occur to them, or the libertarian-neoconservative apologists for uncontrolled immigration who feed them their lines, that their political strategy of appealing to the Hispanic bloc contradicts and undermines the entire neoconservative argument for immigration. That argument has always been that immigrants would assimilate and would not form political and cultural enclaves that contribute to the Balkanization of America, as immigration restrictionists have generally predicted. In fact, by campaigning in Spanish, supporting bilingual education, appealing to ethnic-racial bloc organizations like LULAC and La Raza, refusing to enforce even laws against illegal immigration, and snuggling close to Mexico's government of criminals and tyrants, political leaders like George W. Bush and his emulators are admitting that assimilation has not taken place, that Mexican-Americans do retain their linguistic, cultural, and political allegiances, and that only by our adaptation to them rather than facilitating their adaptation to American society can their votes be won. Maybe Mr. Bush will ride the myth of his appeal to Hispanic voters into the White House. But if he does, it will be at the expense of the American nation he will pretend to lead. c

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Letter From the Pacific Northwest

by Jonathan Ellis

Slaughter on the High Seas

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The sun had not yet risen when a crew of seven Makah Indians launched its hand-carved cedar canoe into the frigid waters around Neah Bay, Washington. The crew paddled west through the Strait of Juan de Fuca and rounded Cape Flattery—the westernmost point of the continental United States—before settling into the Pacific Ocean. The water was calm that morning of May 17, nothing like it had been earlier in the year when furious waves smashed a freighter to pieces off the coast of Oregon. The hunters tacked southward. Hugging the Washington coast, they piloted the canoe through the same hunting grounds that, according to tribal history, the Makah have stalked for 2,000 years.

The hunting party had not gone unnoticed. A platoon of reporters, bivouacked at Neah Bay, waited for word on the hunt. News helicopters trailed the canoe from above. Under normal conditions, a band of Indians prowling America's coastal hinterlands in a dugout canoe would probably not qualify as "news"—not unless an English princess or a Hollywood actor were also on board. But this hunting party was special.

Shortly before 7:00 A.M., local television stations in western Washington carried the breaking news live, as a beefy Makah Indian heaved an enormous harpoon into the back of a gray whale. In the ensuing struggle, the whale could have flipped the canoe and sent its crew airborne with a swipe of its powerful tail. It didn't, and two more harpoons followed the first. From a motorized support boat, a Makah gunner added two walloping hits from a .577-caliber rifle to make the kill as quickly and painlessly as possible. In less than ten minutes—slightly longer than it takes some fishing enthusiasts to reel in a spirited bass—the whale floated quietly in seawater thick with blood.

For news organizations, gory footage of the return of whaling to the continental United States was a brilliant way to kick off the day. For breakfast-eaters held captive by the tube, the coverage probably ruined a few appetites. For the Makah nation, its first successful whale hunt in over seven decades represented a major step forward in its struggle to reclaim community spirit and cultural heritage.

Like most Indian nations that aren't serendipitously located near a major population center from which vast fortunes can be sucked through the hoses of gambling, the Makah nation languishes in remoteness and poverty—both in relation to the rest of the country and to its cultural past. (Not that communities which are situated beyond the horizon of a strip mall and are too poor to support a McDonald's are a bad thing.) But once upon a time, before the days of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and welfare checks, the Makah nation had been wealthy and powerful by aboriginal standards.

Whaling was a dominant feature of Makah culture. The tribe's best hunters faced the giant beasts armed with primitive weapons and courage. The combat was mortal; not infrequently, the whale was the one who swam on. There was no OSHA to insist on worker safety, just a community that counted on its star hunters to provide. Yet by the 1920's, the Makah found providing to be nearly impossible. Commercial whalers from all over the world had hunted grays and other species to the brink of extinction. To make matters worse, the Makah were nearly extinct themselves; disease had culled their number to only a few hundred. Faced with diminished stock of both prey and hunters, the Makah suspended whaling.

The Makah nation steps into the 21st century chained to the staggering burdens it accumulated in the 20th: drug and alcohol abuse combined with the usual mixers of extreme poverty and unemployment. A vast majority of Makah believe the way to reverse the nasty effects of modernity is to revive the traditions and customs of centuries past. Whaling is paramount.

Shortly after the hunting party had slain the tribe's first whale in 70 years, news reports indicated that the whale had filled with water and sunk. (One of the hunters was supposed to leap into the icy water and sew the whale's mouth shut before it filled.) But these reports turned out to be bogus, and by 5:30 that evening, five canoes—the victorious hunting party, and four canoes representing other area tribes—towed the carcass to a beach lined with hundreds of cheering Makah at Neah Bay. Supervised by an Alaskan Inuit, the butchering commenced. The meat was packed off to family freezers, and Makah leaders made plans to host a potlatch that would include tribes from the western United States and Canada.

Four hours southeast of Neah Bay, however, reaction to the hunt in Seattle and its surrounding boroughs was anything but celebratory. In this region, where a sizable population regards Saving the Whales as man's principal calling, the hunt unleashed a firestorm of wrath. As Air Marshal Clinton's *Luftwaffe* continued to menace Yugoslav civilians, the hearts and minds of the Northwest's humanitarians were with that poor whale.

Native American influences are found more in the Pacific Northwest than in most regions of the country. Roads are festooned with totem poles, and people sympathize with Native American causes. From this pool, the Makah enjoyed their share of supporters, people who asked, "What's the big deal if they kill a few gray whales each year?"

This sentiment, however, barely registered in relation to the screeching of the nature-is-more-important-than-people crowd. Environmentalism trumps cultural heritage in the Northwest. Sadly, far more people opposed the hunt than opposed NATO's freewheeling campaign against Serbian mothers-to-be.

The Makah, one woman told a reporter, had "set the world back hundreds of years." On the opinion page of a regional newspaper, a writer urged that we "fly our precious stars and stripes at half-mast to honor the fallen gray whale heroine and to mark a sad day in our nation's history." One man courageously vowed to liquidate his private holding of Makah art, which he no doubt kept in a comfortable upper-middle-class or upper-class home. Another wrote, "The sight of them eating raw pieces of the blubber bordered on cannibalism," and concluded that the Makah had awakened "old hatreds and racism."

On the racism count, at least, she was

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on to something. At best, the Northwest was crawling with cultural imperialists. At worst, it was littered with latent racists. But because it was the racism of hipsters who adorn their Volvos and Volkswagens with politically correct bumper stickers, it didn't generate the high-profile media attention that comes when, say, a pitiful band of neo-Nazis crawls out of the woods and marches down Main Street of a small town in Idaho. Clearly, many of those outraged by the hunt considered it an act of treachery. They had been inculcated with the romantic mythology that Hollywood and public schools dispense: In the days before Eurotrash ruthlessly conquered the New World, the Noble Indian lived in Edenic harmony with Mother Earth, neither polluting the streams in which he urinated nor bending the grass on which he tread.

But the Makah shattered that illusion when they harpooned the whale on live television in front of all those people preparing to do their eight hours for the global economy. Viewers got a bitter dose of what life as an Indian was really like, and it didn't jibe with their sensibilities. Indians in the Northwest hadn't spent their days whittling driftwood into totem poles: They had been engaged in a brutal struggle for survival. Native American cultures may have been predominantly communal—a fact which launches many a drooling daydream—but they were also disciplined, spiritual, and hierarchical. Clear social lines existed between the sexes, and between the weak and the strong. Cripples and weaklings weren't sent out on hunting parties. Too much was riding on their success for egalitarian concerns.

It was strong stuff to swallow . . . too strong for many. Words like "savage" and "barbaric" were used to describe the Makah. They were called "those people" by some of the same people who boiled over with indignation when Ross Perot referred to blacks as "you people." The Makah received death threats, and environmental activists boomed forth that they would use whatever means necessary to stop the Makah from killing again. They may have even wanted to raise an army of Indian fighters—perhaps led by the intrepid Gen. Wesley Clark, hero of Kosovo—to ride west to the coastal frontier to whip the savages into shape.

In this fight, however, environmentalists found themselves on the wrong side of the government. Most area politicians did condemn the hunt. Sen. Slade Gorton and Rep. Jack Metcalf—two Washington Republicans not known for voting with green thumbs—blasted the Makah. Even so, the Makah enjoyed official federal government support in their quest to resume whaling. After gray whales were taken off of the endangered list in 1994, the Makah made it clear they were going to whale again, citing their rights under the Treaty of Neah Bay, which had been signed on January 31, 1855, by Territory of Washington Governor Isaac I. Stevens and representatives of the Makah tribe. The treaty granted explicit whaling rights to the Makah, the only tribe in the continental United States so privileged.

Whaling opponents argued that the treaty no longer applied because, in 1946, the United States signed the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, which established the International Whaling Commission (IWC). In effect, whaling opponents said, the United States could not honor its obligations to the Treaty of Neah Bay because it had signed away that right to the IWC.

The IWC's original mission was to provide for the "optimum utilization of the whale resources" and to safeguard "the interests of the consumers of whale products and the whaling industry." The convention never defined what qualified as a "whale," and the convention's Final Act listed only the names of a dozen species—the "great whales." But as William Aron, William Burke, and Milton Freeman pointed out in the May 1999 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, today's IWC is controlled by members who "act as if the convention covered all whales—and even all cetaceans." In 1982, the IWC placed a moratorium on commercial whaling, effectively strangling the industry it was created to nurse. Now guided by an animal-rights agenda "based on moral judgments rather than science," the IWC violates the international rule of law and the convention's spirit.

A loophole to the 1982 moratorium allowed aboriginal peoples non-commercial whaling rights if they could demonstrate subsistence needs and an ongoing tradition of whaling. Anti-whaling forces believed the Makah didn't qualify because they had not whaled in 70 years. But nobody could deny that whaling, and the spiritual activities that revolve around whaling, had remained central to their heritage and cultural identity. It wasn't as if the Makah, flush with the hope of the Industrial Revolution, had abandoned whaling in the 1920's to open an automobile company to compete with Ford.

Whaling foes also argued the Makah had done just fine for 70 years without putting whale on their dinner plates. Though true, this argument ignored the tribe's future subsistence needs. The Makah had not needed whale because they had fallen into the viper's nest of government-assistance programs. Rather than applauding their efforts at becoming more self-sufficient, those opposing the Makah seemed to be saying, "Let them rot on welfare."

In 1997, the IWC approved a deal in which the United States exchanged a portion of its quota of bowhead whales, hunted by Alaskan Inuit, for a portion of Russia's gray-whale quota, which Siberian natives hunt. According to anti-whaling groups, the U.S. delegation then pulled a fast one on the IWC by giving the gray-whale quota to the Makah, allowing them to kill up to five annually until 2002. Anti-whaling groups complained that the IWC never recognized the Makah's aboriginal claims, a fact which both the U.S. delegation and anti-whaling delegations to the IWC confirm. In 1998, U.S. IWC Commissioner James Baker told the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* that the IWC "grants quotas; it does not identify people" who will do the hunting, a decision which is left up to the discretion of the member nation with the quota. That the IWC recognized the quota, continued Baker, "is sufficient legal support for the Makahs to do their whaling."

Anti-whaling groups refused to accept Baker's take. As the Makah prepared to launch their first whaling party in the fall of 1998, the anti-whalers vowed to put a stop to the "illegal" hunt. They descended upon Neah Bay *en masse*. Led by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society—die-hard environmentalists who consider Greenpeace and the Sierra Club to be sissies—a motley armada dropped anchor in the waters outside Neah Bay to confront the savages. The Coast Guard decided to head off trouble by proposing a 500-yard exclusion zone around Makah whaling vessels that would keep protesters at bay.

At first, the showdown attracted gangs of reporters from all over the world. But interest soon dissipated when the two sides drifted into the doldrums of a routine that went something like this: By late morning, a few dozen or so Makah would gather at the beach near their marina. The pantheist fleet would steam in-

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to the reservation harbor shortly thereafter and float a stone's throw from the beach. From that point on, the two sides would exchange insults, often aided by bull horns. The Makah generously employed the f-word and referred to the "eco-colonialists" as "walruses," which to them is evidently some kind of putdown. The whale saviors held an obvious educational advantage over the Makah. Between ear-shattering blasts of taped whale screeching over a ship's speaker system, the environmentalists belittled the Makah with such insults as, "You speak like an eight-year-old. Blah, blah, blah."

Though the two sides detested each other, the confrontation didn't degenerate into a full-scale bloodbath. The worst day came on November 1, when the Makah captured an inflatable Zodiac that had ventured too close to shore. The crew was ceremoniously dunked in the water to the cheers of over a hundred Indians, and then hauled away by police. A protester who came ashore to save his comrades was wrestled face-first onto the cement by tribal police officers. Among the rewards for his bravery was a front-page picture of his bloody face on a Seattle newspaper and a scar across the forehead that will probably be regarded in his circle as a status symbol.

The Makah never mounted a serious hunt in the fall of 1998. Fierce weather kept the hunting party close to home. The next opportunity to bag a gray whale would not come until spring, when grays migrate from their breeding grounds off Baja to their feeding grounds in the waters around Russia and Alaska.

A week after the Makah brought home one of those migrating grays—and the scorn and abuse that accompanied it—word came that gray whales were destroying fine beachfront property up and down the western coast of the United States. Naturalists called it an unprecedented die-off, but those who found their favorite beach planted with a rotting gray whale carcass called it disgusting.

In the first six months of 1999, 83 dead grays washed ashore, compared with 38 during the whole of 1998. Stephanie Dorenzas, a spokeswoman for the National Marine Fisheries Service, said that a government committee was studying the problem. She refused to speculate on whether the whales were starving to death. But other naturalists aren't waiting for committee reports. They point to the burgeoning gray whale population, which stands somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000, as evidence that grays are overwhelming their ecosystem. Some naturalists claim there are more gray whales today than ever.

It's common practice to thin land animals with selective hunting. Yet if a person in downtown Seattle proposed selective hunting as a way to trim whale numbers, he would be in immediate danger of being lynched. Many people here have the sort of moral fervor for whales that mullahs have for Allah. The Makah are aware of this. When their hunting parties venture into the Pacific Ocean looking for grays, they'll remember that not a few people here would prefer seeing a crew of Makah Indians floating in the water over the sight of another harpooned whale.

Jonathan Ellis writes from the Pacific Northwest.

Letter From Venice

by Andrei Navrozov

The Lagoon and the Abyss

◆

What Exile from himself can flee?
To Zones, though more and more remote,
Still, still pursues, where-e'er I be,
The blight of life—the demon, Thought.
—Lord Byron

Thus a previous occupant of our palazzo. Romantic rubbish, you say? Venice not remote enough for him? Should have tried some other zone, freezing rain in October and 40 below in March, shovel in hand and memories of a cigarette as his main divertissement? In the vulgar idiom of a less fortunate generation:

Next morning the fog was all gone,
The furious waves calmed down,
Before us arose Magadan,
The Kolyma zone's head town.

As I write this, with the gentle voice of Italian winter for a soundtrack whimpering pitifully somewhere beyond the Arsenale just as the 20th century has always been meant to whimper in farewell, there is but a single thought in my head, namely, that the Christian world as we know it is going to relive the history of totalitarian Russia in our lifetime. I look at the demon thought this way, and that; I turn it over in my mind, and look at it sideways, and then again in the face; I look at it in unaccountably frequent moments of happiness and during bouts of depression; dead drunk and stone sober; alone and in conversation with friends; but no matter how I look at it, I see no escape from what appears to be unavoidable. Not historically inevitable, mind you, because I am not fool enough to get worked up over theories of history, or entangle myself in ontological disputation; not divinely predestined, for roughly the same reason; but simply unavoidable, in the sense that an egg will surely crack if the huge leathery bottom of an adult hippopotamus comes to rest upon it.

I am not talking politics, either. Even if I came to believe, against all evidence to the contrary, that the ruling junta in Russia will suddenly terminate its continuing nuclear, chemical, and biological armament while the West will curtail its own strategic disarmament, with the result that the United States, France, and Britain will retain some viable deterrent against global blackmail in the years to come; or that Pat Buchanan, despite having neither campaign funds nor a political machine nor a fair press, will be elected president by a landslide, neither to invoke Averell Harriman in his inaugural address nor to lunch with Henry Kissinger the day after; or that the tomatoes offered for sale in a supermarket in Birmingham will become as real as the homegrown produce of Sant' Erasmo which I can still find on some mornings at the Rialto; even if I came to believe all that, and in the tooth fairy besides, I would conclude that the bad news balanced the good 1:1 in the sense defined by the seller of sausages with a filling of horsemeat and partridge in an old Russian story, meaning one horse to one partridge.

Over Christmas I bought the "*Numero Millennium*" of the Italian current affairs weekly *Panorama*, mainly because the magazine's cover story, entitled "Welcome to the Twenty-First Century," was largely taken up with European Union statistics. Obviously, nobody with a desk job in Italy was going to work over the holidays, not even in Milan, and the issue had been printed well in advance, some desperate journalists having hit upon the ploy of publishing raw data in feverish anticipation of skiing in Cortina d'Ampez-

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zo. Since I was probably that issue's only reader—everybody else was out buying giblets and stocking up on lentils—I must report the stale news it contained, in the form of the Index of Preparedness for the Future and another called the Index of Social Harmony. "Which of the fifteen member states of the European Union," the statisticians were asked, "is the most innovative and dynamic (*più dinamici e innovativi*)?" Last on the list was Italy. "Which European country affords the best opportunity of living in peace (*dove si vive più serenamente*)?" First on the list is Italy.

What I am saying here, politics apart, is that *Panorama*'s cockamamie sociologists are obviously right on the money. Like Lord Byron, the world is unhappy. It yearns to be innovative and dynamic. It wants new, stranger, and stronger sensations and experiences, not peace and homegrown tomatoes from Sant' Erasmo. It is only nominally Christian—as, anyway, was Byron—in the sense that it no longer feels Christ's wounds as its own, and certainly has no intimate, keenly remembered knowledge of any more recent wounds, and of any more efficient methods of inflicting them, than the Crucifixion. The zones less remote from physical suffering are, for the people of the United States and Europe—in whose hands the prosperity and the liberty of the world are still held provisionally—something akin to the famous Steinberg cartoon of Manhattan, where Rhodes, Kerensky, Attlee, Hitler, Stalin, Attila, McCarthy, Napoleon, Mao, Nixon, Lincoln, Washington, Churchill, Franco, Henry VIII, Charles IX, Nicholas I, Gorbachev, Medici, and Milosevic make up a giant Pol Pot of schoolbook history twaddle whose relevance to the individual citizen of the West, *mutatis mutandis*, is infinitely smaller than the appeal of a nationally advertised brand of sportswear.

Which one of us, on being approached by a homosexual prostitute in the men's lavatory at Grand Central Station, most plausibly a Hollywood scriptwriter who was last paid for a story 15 years ago and has since become a heroin addict, will give him $100 and whisper: "No, his life is not over. He can start again, maybe learning to weave baskets for a gallery in the Village, or to make funny-shaped pies for children's parties. Better yet, he can set up an Internet site, where even Siberian villagers can share his sad experiences and learn from them. He can change, get married, read Kant's *Prolegomena* on Saturday nights and the Bible on Sundays. At the very least he can become a real-estate broker. Did Saul not become Paul?" What I am saying here, I repeat, is that the world's accelerating slide into the totalitarian abyss is as culturally preconditioned as the likely self-destruction of the man in the lavatory. Politics, in view of the wholesale evisceration of democratic politics in America and Britain—to say nothing of the Russian and Eastern European simulacrum that was never intended to supersede or impede the ruling Andropovite *junta*—are only a small factor in this process of degradation, and even the soundest possible electoral outcomes can no more reverse the trend than the unexpected, and frankly unlikely, gift of a $100 bill can change the life, and avert the death, of a degenerate moron on the skids.

The difference, heartbreaking as I feel it, is that the Christian world of today—still full of beauty, still God-abiding of a severe winter day, still verdant in springtime—is more like the doomed Lord Byron than it is like the HIV-positive scriptwriter. It is external circumstances that have changed. If a British peer of the realm in 1820 was, like Britain and the

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Please read Peter Erickson's *The Stance Of Atlas: An Examination Of The Philosophy Of Ayn Rand.* More than a criticism, it answers many of the questions which Rand had attempted. Writes **Dean Turner**, Professor Emeritus in the Philosophy of Education at Northern Colorado University and author of several books on philosophy and science:

Mr. Erickson does not argue against capitalism, nor is he a skeptic of reason. But he does refute several of her key doctrines. He reveals important connections between her philosophy and Lenin's Dialectical Materialism. He surmises that she changed those parts which were inconsistent with laissez faire capitalism and the inviolability of the law of identity, retaining such features as its atheism. He also shows the connection between her thought and Einstein's theory of relativity.

Mr. Erickson argues that Rand inconsistently held a view mid-way between monism and dualism or pluralism. Ayn Rand offered a new theory of the concept based on the idea of similarity. Mr. Erickson shows that significant parts of this theory are fallacious. She believed that her philosophy held the key to the solution of the problem of induction. He not only refutes this belief but shows how the problem was solved in large part by the late John Cook Wilson, Professor of Logic at Oxford University. Mr. Erickson also refutes Rand's attempt to solve the problem of universals; then he provides his answer.

In her theory of ethics, Rand attempted to solve the famous fact-value problem by arguing that the concept "value" is inexplicable in the absence of the concept "life." Mr. Erickson shows that, at most, her theory can account for those ideas dependent on physical survival and minimum mental health; that it cannot account for much of the higher values.... The result of her radical inconsistencies is that, despite her exaltation of individualism, she and her followers have ended up trying to institutionalize her philosophy. No deviations allowed!

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rest of the Christian world at the time, the undisputed master of his own destiny, even the wealthiest American of 180 years later is, like the United States of today, but one vector in myriad other strategic quantities of which tomorrow is composed. It made no difference to Byron's future that the richest countries of his day were three times richer than the poorest, including the part of the world now called Pakistan. Today, it ought to make one hell of a difference to a Briton that the world's poorest countries are 77 times poorer than the richest, and that Pakistan has successfully tested medium-range nuclear weapons.

I don't know. I'm going to have some giblets with lentils for supper, smoke a Tuscan cigar, and see if that makes the perspective any more rosy.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

Letter From Arizona

by Tod Newman

On the Border

◆

In the southeast corner of Arizona, surrounded by the beautifully wild, mile-high Sonoran Desert, lies the town of Douglas. I am writing from a booth in the coffee shop of the Gadsden Hotel, an ornate hotel rebuilt in the 1920's with a gilded roof supported by smooth marble pillars. Thornton Wilder stayed here for a year while working on *The Eighth Day*; today, a gentle but headless ghost stalks the basement.

Across the Mexican border in Agua Prieta, factories built into the hills no more than ten miles distant spout their disdain for American sensibilities in the form of smoke that casually drifts across the border into Douglas when the wind is right. The factory effluent rains down on Douglas as thickly as the bullets did when Pancho Villa's revolution came to Agua Prieta.

Seeing this smoke crawling into our national airspace makes me wonder just how wise it is to open up trade with a country which does not impose the kind of environmental regulations on its industries that an American factory must obey. Driving north from the border up Sixth Avenue, one finds parts of Douglas filling with newer shops that have moved into older buildings. These stores proudly advertise "*el precia mejor*" and are packed with relatively wealthy Mexicans wearing Nike and Adidas jogging outfits and carrying their bundled purchases. This is the pleasant side of free trade across the border. A short trip down US 92 to the west, however, quickly reveals the converse view: the well-worn footpaths heading north through the arid desert brush. This less pleasant view of free trade, in this case trade in labor, is even more noticeable in the washes following a rain, when thousands of footprints mysteriously appear overnight. The eyes on the other side of the border fence shine in the headlights of the Border Patrol vehicle, patiently waiting for it to pass so numerous shadowy figures can sprint across the dusty control road into the Sonoran Desert in the hope of reaching Albuquerque or Denver—and jobs. Frequently mixed in with the honest laborers looking for work are violent drug smugglers and other criminals. Ranchers and landowners around Douglas are beginning to respond violently to this nightly invasion, which leaves behind cut fences, wandering livestock, and threatened, fearful families. NAFTA, we were told, would end this second, less desirable form of free trade by creating more Mexican jobs. No one who visits Agua Prieta, Nogales, or Juárez will doubt that jobs have been created over the last few years. So why does this undesired labor trade still occur?

Why do men—1,000 per night, by some estimates—continue to cross this dangerous border? The laborers attracted to the jobs created in Mexico's border cities are overwhelmingly young females who will work for less than one U.S. dollar per hour. The girls who flow into these Mexican factories, or *maquiladoras*, usually come from poorer rural areas in the interior of Mexico and are happy to band together in cardboard huts without electricity or running water for the illusory freedom and poor wages that the *maquiladoras* provide. Girls as young as 12 or 13 lie about their ages to gain employment in the factories. This, of course, drives down labor costs which, in the absence of a tariff, results in a cheaper product than even Asia can provide and a demand for more low-paying jobs. Side effects that should not surprise those familiar with the American welfare experiment are a rise in single motherhood, increased violence against women, and the collapse of the culture of the working Mexican poor. This is not a good labor market for a man supporting a family. The prospect of making three or more times as much money in U.S. cities may well seem worth the hazards associated with the border crossing.

Is it wise to implement free trade with Mexico without insisting on economic controls similar to those under which American industry operates? Without enforcing at least some minimal controls, we are likely doing irreparable harm not only to our environment and workers, but also to the Mexican environment, culture, and family. The "bullets" that now rain down on Douglas might seem blanks to outsiders, but they could prove far more harmful than the lead that came from Villa's revolution.

Tod Newman writes from Tucson, Arizona.

Letter From Virginia

by Marshall Fishwick

The Old Dominion Meets Sploge

◆

What poses the greatest threat today to the Old Dominion—mother of Presidents, a state secure and renowned for precious memories and aspirations? No person or foreign power, but a vast impersonal force already despoiling cities and states around the globe, a force that I call "sploge": unregulated, unchecked growth, fueled by the three G's—Greed, Glitz, and Glut. It despoiled great cities like Cairo, Bombay, Rio de Janeiro, and Mexico City, then crept into the United States: Los Angeles, the New York-New Haven corridor, central New Jersey. Having infected Washington, will it move south into Virginia? How will the traffic, pollution, confusion, and congestion change our way of life?

I set out to seek answers, starting with the fast-spreading sploge already linking Blacksburg and Christiansburg on Route 460. (Three-digit highways seem to breed sploge. Have you ridden on Vir-

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ginia's 220, 301, or 360 lately?)

Just outside Blacksburg, the tightly packed line of unsold cars, fast-food outlets, service stations (which don't give service), and ticky-tacky shanties stand doorway to doorway as cars move bumper to bumper. Passing what used to be a lovely arboretum, I reach the humbled intersection of 460 and 116: I call it Indigestion Junction, from the cluster of fast-food outlets spliced with used cars, a cemetery, a huge bowling-alley complex, and automobiles pouring in and out of the nearby Wal-Mart and Big K-Mart. Soon, I'm at another jumble where 460 meets I-81: This speed-death trap is so sploged that the governor stationed half of the state patrol cars there. On Sunday, February 21, 1999, they gave out over 100 speeding tickets. Who can say how many they missed?

I dodge in and out of truck convoys, yearning to get to the Route 50 exit—a two-laner in Northern Virginia through Paul Mellon country that has resisted every sploge attack (at least until 50 hits Fairfax County). Mellon might well be the Virginian of the Century, not only for his philanthropy but for keeping a whole area safe and civilized: playing a major role in restoring Monticello, preserving the landscape, being a responsible Virginia citizen. He cared.

Paul Mellon graced 91 years of the 20th century. Had he lived longer, he would have faced another formidable problem—the speculative construction taking off near Dulles Airport. A new super-sploge threatens Mellon's Northern Virginia; nearly 8.5 million square feet of office space (as much space as in downtown Miami) is being built, financed by millions of "speculative dollars."

Fairfax County already has twice as much available office space as the downtown cores of such cities as Boston, Philadelphia, Houston, Dallas, and Atlanta. Where will this building boom land us? "You never really know," a key Virginia developer, Chris Walker, admits. "It's sort of like the stock market."

"Spec" construction is a dicey, take-a-chance scheme that can bring in big bucks—or fall flat (as it did throughout southeast Asia) and leave environmental nightmares. But even successful mega-explosion results in crowd culture, with its traffic jams, bankruptcies, legal battles, junk mail, flimflams, virtual reality, and honking horns. Push, shove, and curse; it doesn't help. Join the crowd in this brave new world, and lose your identity.

Beware the glut, not only of cars, paper, and electronic information, but also piles of garbage. Would you believe that Virginia receives 5,000 tons a day from New York City, dumping it onto land adjacent to one of our most precious spots, William Byrd's Westover Plantation? I had intended to go see for myself—but I haven't the stomach for it. Instead, I take Exit 156 off of I-95 into historic Prince William County to visit Potomac Mills—which my "fact sheet" describes as a "super-regional mall encompassing 152 acres featuring live potted foliage." I could shorten that hyperbole to one word: sploge.

Potomac Mills—a 1.7 million-square-foot center with parking spaces for over 9,000 cars—"aggressively markets" not only domestic travel, but also (again, quoting my fact sheet) "international tourism concentrating on UK, Germany, South America, Brussels, and Amsterdam." Come one, come all—get your free shopping bags and discount coupon books with a value of over $400! Hungry? There are 23 eateries (an appropriate word), shopping-cart rentals, and hard floors "most conducive to walking." And, of course, spending.

Are there any malls like this in other states? "Oh yes," a well-rehearsed tour manager assures me. "We have malls in major cities all over America, and plan to expand. Who knows—we might build one near you. Where are you from?"

"Blacksburg."

She drags out her map. "Never heard of it. What's it near?"

"Roanoke."

"Is that near Richmond? Oh. Here it is, just off I-81. Well, someday we may put a super-mall between Roanoke and—where did you say you live?"

"Never mind," I reply, walking quickly away. Puzzled, but still smiling her perpetual smile, she hurries back to her pack.

Is there a future for Virginia's past? Of course—if we help to defend, explain, and preserve it. Groups like the Preservation Alliance of Virginia can play a key role. They have a daunting task. Nearly 40 percent of those living in Virginia today are non-natives; since World War II, we have grown ten percent every ten years. It is estimated that, by the year 2030, Virginia will have a population of over eight million. What will the "Virginia tradition" mean then?

The wheeler-dealers, splogers, and mallers will dismiss my case as sentimental and nostalgic. "Get a life," they will say. "Get off your narrow backroads onto the Information Highway. Think tomorrow!"

I have tried, and I've found a good deal of misinformation and virtual nonsense. I'm worried about today. I side with former University of Virginia President Edwin A. Alderman: "We Virginians are sometimes laughed at for our sensitiveness to local things and our pride of state. We will not be laughed out of these things."

Of course, we must seek middle ground, accepting some change and inevitable growth. But we will take our stand and remember our heritage. Our traditional state song ("Carry Me Back to Old Virginia") is gone, but the birds still warble sweet in the springtime. We intend to keep Virginia green. We will not trade our white dogwood blossoms, blushing redbuds, and masses of mountain laurel for 30 pieces of silver.

I find my car in the auto jungle and head home. To avoid I-81, I cut off on old Route 11 and travel through Salem, Shawsville, and Elliston. Later on, I might just go to Blacksburg's community center, Abingdon's Barter Theater, and Galax's Fiddler's Convention. As I pull into my driveway, a sassy blue jay chirps a greeting, and Edward, our gaudy golden retriever, comes running out, tail wagging.

It's good to be home.

Marshall Fishwick is a professor of American Studies at Virginia Tech.

LIBERAL ARTS

. . . BUT I WAS JUST A KID

"Britain's Scout Association blasted veteran rock star Elton John . . . for staging a raunchy dance routine with male strippers dressed as cub scouts.

"The flamboyant star, singing at a 10th birthday party for the gay rights group Stonewall, was accompanied by six teenage dancers who peeled off their toggles, caps and scout uniforms to dance in their underwear.

"A spokesman for the Scout Association, Britain's best known boys' club, said: 'We are disappointed a star of Elton John's caliber participated in something that was so lacking in taste.'"

—*from Reuters (November 30, 1999)*

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LITERATURE

The Golden Goose: A Recollection

by Robert Beum

In the bright, warm autumn of 1947 that followed a chilly summer, several hundred bewildered 17-year-olds found the Ohio State University campus in Columbus swarming with an alien and formidable species: veterans. The war, though well over, was still more a reality than a memory. The Great Depression was over too, having disappeared insensibly in the war years. But the Affluent Society had not yet made its self-congratulatory appearance. There remained a creative poverty, the thrift that spurs imagination and makes it possible to rejoice in building something out of nothing; and there remained what affluence had set its sights on destroying: a certain settledness, a measure of the old quietness, in people and in the streets, that had linked the generations. Sheer "making do" made sense, even to the young. So did discipline, prudence, scholarship, good looks, good clothes, and even, to a certain extent, modesty and chasteness. In 1947, service and good manners were still almost routine. Literacy, including cultural literacy, was an expectation with a moral force behind it. Everyone read, if only Street and Smith pulps, and words seen, heard, formed with the fingers, and unhurriedly turned over in the mind did what can be done for sensibility in no other way.

The scene had something to do with the hatching of *The Golden Goose*, a little press and little magazine that published established and unestablished writers from 1949 through 1954. The history of the *Goose* has never been written. Richard Wirtz Emerson, the man best qualified to write it, died in chaotic circumstances, and what papers he kept may well have disappeared along with him. Frederick Eckman, co-founder of the enterprise, died in 1996, leaving only scattered notes on his years with the *Goose*. But his death seems to have revitalized the long-standing awareness that we published some of the earliest work of writers who would go on to make their mark (Robert Creeley, Kenneth Rexorth, Charles Edward Eaton, and Eckman himself were among them) and that our proselytizing for William Carlos Williams was not without effect.

But that renewed awareness can say little or nothing about what we were and how we worked. It seems almost impossible for anyone born later than 1950 to realize how much could be done on a shoestring in the earlier half of this century. The *Goose* was able to fly pretty high and a long way without government or foundation grants or university connections, even without personal fortune. It seems equally unimaginable today that a seminal and productive venture in writing and publishing could be personal, judgmental, anti-democratic, irregular, and free of committees. But such we were, and worse: In a fashion thoroughly antique, we put friendship and loyalty to one another ahead of success in the venture itself. In fact, that venture was only one aspect of an exuberant camaraderie and a youthful commitment to spontaneity. In the present world of packaged living that substitutes careerism, specialization, and self-conscious ideology for personal identity, such an insouciance may be equally unpicturable.

In any event, the late 40's were the right years for poetry and its printing. The potential audience remained: Poetry—as distinct from poetized ideology—lingered on in the school curricula, luring those who were capable of being lured and who might not have known they were unless there had been assignments and homework on Keats, Tennyson, Bryant, and Poe. There were incidental but not inconsiderable postwar felicities: High-quality paper had returned to the marketplace—we dug up Ticonderoga laid text like buried treasure—and labor costs, though they were going up, were still well below the stratosphere. The really big things were the Depression and the war. The Depression had sobered the country, deepened it a little. The war, following immediately, extended that sobered consciousness. The tragic sense developed and was not erased at once by victory and peace. Poverty and loss—from late 1929 through 1941; then several years of sacrifice, disruption of lives, carnage; it was another, and very long, interruption of America's pursuit of the happiness of materialism; and when heroic and tragic values become meaningful, the poetic life within us revives and flourishes as well. One unmistakable sign of the national lapse into spiritual life was the immense popularity and prestige of serious music during the war and for several years afterward. In a relatively dull and uncouth prairie town like Columbus there were more Bach concerts than one could possibly attend; Schumann was almost as well known as John Philip Sousa; even Brahms, that backward-looking, broken-hearted idealist, commanded an audience inconceivable today.

Another unmistakable sign appeared to me one October afternoon. I had wandered into one of the North High Street shops across from the main gate of the campus, gone directly up a short flight of stairs, and had something to eat—the fast-food palaces were not yet pandemic, and to eat you sometimes not only had to go inside but also handle a short stairway. On the way out, I noticed what any observant person would have noticed on the way in: a huge wooden rack overflowing with the latest issues of arty and generally exotic little magazines. There were names like *Imagi*, *Cronos*, and *Tiger's Eye*, and all of them featured poetry. I dared to leaf through a few but was too dazzled, and probably too pressed for time as well, to read much. I had been writing poetry—that is, trying to write it—since my early teens, and I was suddenly aware that there was a much bigger market than I had supposed. How recently that market had expanded, or why it had expanded, I had no idea. I only knew that, at that moment, my urge to write and to publish expanded a hundredfold. I wanted my name in that rack.

That very autumn, though I didn't know it, Richard Wirtz Emerson was editing his first magazine, *Cronos*, right across the street, with assistance from Fred Eckman. Many years later, Fred described Dick's editorial debut:

> a month or so after I arrived at OSU in the fall of 1946, I saw a bulletin-board notice somewhere or other that there would be an organization meeting of a "writers workshop" in the (old) Ohio Union. The usual motley crew as-

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sembled—maybe a dozen or so. The meeting was called to order by one Ward Taylor, a pleasant chap—stocky, horn-rimmed, prematurely balding—who looked more like an accounting than an English major. About 10 or 15 minutes into the meeting our old pal Dick the Dude made an entrance. Tall, very blond, wearing an expensive trench coat with a white silk scarf and pigskin gloves. Big theatrical smile. Apologized for being late, but explained that his uncle, Russell Wirtz, had treated him to "a magnificent filet mignon" at some private club or other, and that they had "lingered over a snifter of 4-Star Hennessey Cognac." Theatrical, hokey—but nonetheless impressive.

It wasn't long until people quite willingly ceded the leadership to Mr. Charisma. A few proletarian grumbles could be heard, but by and large the whole group felt that here was a character out of F. Scott Fitzgerald, not some pushy little s--- from Fraternity Row. Emerson had ideas, was a good critic, showed a genuine interest in everybody, etc. etc. We had a number of meetings at various places on campus, and 2 or 3 times out in the ever-popular basement study at 1927 Northwest Boulevard. By late winter the idea of *Cronos* was born, and by spring it actually existed.

This vignette may be taken as Holy Writ: Fred Eckman was the closest observer and the most disinterested, if also comic, reporter I ever knew. Dick Emerson was Gatsby himself, an "elegant roughneck" more moneyed than the rest of us, intelligent, articulate, impenetrably private, and—like Gatsby before him—obsessed with a latter-day Daisy he was losing or about to begin losing. (She was known to us as Frances Helen; Dick dedicated his first and best book—now a collector's item—to her: *Poems from the River Lo.*)

The classrooms, jammed with those lean and hungry G.I.-Billers, intimidated some of us. As a child, I had played on the long, quiet greenswards and climbed with the quieting ivy, and at 17 I had still envisioned college life as an idyll, the lifting landscapes and the leisurely pursuance of texts blending into a high-minded, almost too satisfying pastoral. I woke to find that I had to hurry everywhere and work too hard and that even speed and persistence did not suffice. Two years went by before I was able to put together a few poems I thought fit to be read, nerve myself up, and submit them to *The Golden Goose*, the phoenix that had risen from the ashes of the short-lived *Cronos*. The response to my poems was a phone call from Fred Eckman. The *Goose* needed an editorial assistant, and I was a possibility. The interview was to take place at Larry's Tavern, a favorite haunt of campus *literati* and other odd sets.

I got there first, all nerves, hoping to make a good impression. For one ready to commit himself to modern poetry, I had plenty of limitations aside from the bright green color of my years. I had read some Pound and Eliot and most of Stevens, Hart Crane, and William Carlos Williams with a certain pleasure, but I was no devotee of literary or any other modernism. I liked Nietzsche's prose better than most moderns' verse, and I supposed I would have to keep quiet about my attachment to Keats and the Impressions poems of Wilde, not to mention the exploits conjured up by Rider Haggard and Abraham Merritt.

Eckman the Unknown arrived on time. Big enough to make the varsity in those days; fully as fair as Emerson, but of smaller bone and finer features; cool eyes reticent but generous; a posture ever so slightly stooped, a walk with a barely detectable shuffle; a weak, hanging handshake; and overall a certain limpness suggesting not weakness or lack of tone but a retiring and contemplative nature. Wittily ironic in every phrase: Raymond Chandler as an overworked graduate student but equally acerbic on the scene at hand or distant.

For my nerves, he proved to be all remedy: He was understanding, obliging, intelligently self-effacing. Like Emerson, he had the unconscious assurance that can come—though it doesn't always—from sheer physical magnitude; it was complemented by a touch of phlegm, as it was in Emerson by far more than a touch of courteously menacing aggressiveness. Both men projected a calm with kindness behind it—a Northern European, slightly taciturn kindness, not the effusive thing that targets you and hems you in. Much Fred's junior, and readily given to admiration, I immediately made him an heroic figure. Of course, I had already made First Reader for *The Golden Goose* an heroic position.

A week or so later, I met Emerson at his Arlington apartment, the office, though not yet the printery, of the *Goose*. The man must have approved of his talent scout's choice: That same evening, I carried home a large stack of manuscripts; my elation was considerably larger. The adventure had begun.

In it, I figure as the most minor of all the characters. I was six or seven years younger than the two principals, and of course the emprise was already well under way before I joined it. But even Fred discovered there was and would always be only a single protagonist: Dick the energetic, suave, gracious tyrant. In any mild or wild Goose hunt that develops in the future, the trackers are as likely as not to bag the wrong game: To follow the lines of sheer probability is to conclude that the story of the *Goose* is one of humanitarian dedication and literary patriotism—surely the three of us must have been *pares inter pares* dedicated to the furtherance of American literary culture by providing new talent with a way into print. Far from the truth. Pronounce *Golden Goose*, and you've uttered Dick Emerson.

First and last, the adventure was his. Dick drew up the plans, cut the lumber, built the shop, and ran it; with assistance, sometimes valuable no doubt, but probably never indispensable, from us. As for that incorrigibly rhetorical word "dedication," it just doesn't fit. To some extent, all of us were happy to be trying to promote good literature for its own sake; but we were also happy to have found a place, a noticeable place, within the activity of contemporary letters; Dick, in particular, possessed the motive of empire; and much of what we did was . . . to have larks. Working quietly through the late hours, the tireless letterpress kissing the beautiful paper again and again, sometimes until dawn or later; deciding on a format; anticipating a manuscript from William Carlos Williams—we published his *Pink Church*; telephoning Ernest Hemingway in Havana; analyzing the handsomeness of final print copy; handsetting our names and lines in the pre-democratic elegance of Caslon Old Style or in the clean modernity of Garamond Light; writing a letter of acceptance that would make some young poet whistle, do handsprings, or run rather than walk . . . with tricks and games like those, who gave a thought to "dedication" or to some self-conscious category like "American literature"? The golden

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goose was a living bird, instinctive, spontaneous, self-delighted, not the stuffed trophy of academics or politicized gnostic dreamers living in the future and dead in the present. Emerson's energy, ambient and unstoppable, rhythmic as the kissing platen, was itself a lark to behold. He insisted too often on imposing his will, but after all, it was a will born to be imposed; and it brought home the horns of plenty. Break that will, and you would break the whole man. All or nothing. Fred and I were amply prepared to endure a bit of silent pique now and then rather than indulge the temptation to make more than need be made over some disagreement on a choice of cover stock or a point of literary theory.

In the modern world, writers are expected to be not only dedicated—to something beyond "mere" writing, that is—but "humanitarian" or "humanist" as well. None of us qualified. We considered the preaching of humanitarianism to be a projection of ego writ large, and we couldn't see that collective egotism was in any way superior to the individual variety. In any event, without being visibly religious, we listened to our instincts and, if only unconsciously, put God where we thought He belonged: ahead of man, collective or otherwise. Our instinct had been bolstered by experience: Consistently, all three of us had found the "lovers of humanity" to be self-deluded people with heads full of fuzz and hearts full of materialism. Like many other young people in that long-ago time, we were idealistic, but mainly about art and aesthetic imagination, not about human nature or "the future." None of us could have been completely comfortable on top of Parnassus: We were too American—insufficiently rarefied. But it was good art, and beauty in general, that beckoned us, and we were aware that when it came to a forced choice—honest, insubservient art on the one hand or comforts and amusements for the masses on the other—the Humanitarians, often people of learning and sensibility, usually went over to Demos, thus confirming their suspicion that art was the enemy of the people.

None of us were comfortable in bohemia or in proledom, and none of us had ever seen a melting pot that wasn't full of dross. America had come straight out of Europe—originally, for the most part, out of its north—and we considered that a highly acceptable provenance. In short, though we befriended and published anarchists (Leslie Hedley), communists (Horace Schwartz), Jews (Stanley Rosen), hippies (Christopher Maclaine), and what not, our own place, home sweet home, was on the right, especially that large section of it where one is far enough away from abstractions, activisms, and unreal social or chronological speculations to be free to listen only to instinct and imagination and to focus keenly on little things of insuperable importance, like phrases and metrics. We had leanings and preferences, not *esprit de parti*. Emerson would have established a benevolent autocracy—preferably with himself as autocrat. Fred felt that right-wing Republicanism was probably the least evil of American political choices. I agreed with him but was already becoming the royalist I was to remain.

I mention this "conservatism" because it represented the interior—temperament, and lessons learned the hard way, rather than extrinsic and isolated "political affiliation"—and as such it helped determine what sort of bird the *Goose* would be, and of course whether it would hatch in the first place. I also mention it as a corrective: It is still widely believed, just as it was in 1949, that literature belongs to the left, that a little press or little magazine would be, automatically, at least bohemian-anarchic, very pink if not outright red. In part, our outlook represented the conservatism that inheres in all classicism, by which we understood the recognition and even the appreciation of limits, and the desire to see things as they really are: In our own experience, there really was an Other, and it wasn't us, and the semiotic double-talk becoming fashionable in the classrooms seemed no more than the respectable camouflage by which nihilism covers its desire to pull everything down while it rises perversely above the law. We understood the appeal of Romantic idleness, but we had a taste for ordinary physical work, found responsibility toning, and rejected the psychology of self-indulgence, a psychology that promises the infinite but in the end only delivers self-imprisonment. Dick Emerson sometimes remarked that by "golden goose" he implied, among other things, the desire to "goose" modern letters and so cause it to leap unexpectedly into another golden, i.e., classical, age. Dick was no enemy of multiple meanings and was capable of appreciating the charm of the farfetched. In any event, he considered himself an anti-Romantic in the tradition of T.E. Hulme and Mario Praz. Fred and I left the preaching to him, but the line was our line too.

To me, literary modernism in general, from Pound onward, has come to seem thin: overly verbal, deifying technique, and often ignoring the depth, variety, and mystery of existence, and I was at least half of that mind in the days of the *Goose*. The modernist element in Emerson was actually modified by the Europeanism, the sense of the past, that had begun to grow strongly in him when he went overseas as a *Stars and Stripes* correspondent. In Rome, he had met George Santayana, lover of tradition, even of throne and altar, despite his skepticism. The young soldier-journalist had been moved, changed, by the old philosopher's retention of youthful alertness within a serenity born of his gladly acknowledged indebtedness to the traditions that had made his own rich-minded life possible. When we knew Dick, he was always much in love with vintage Italy, especially with the Italy of Lorenzo de Medici. He constantly alluded to Lorenzo, obviously identifying himself with that dynamic, if showy, patron of the arts. My own responsiveness to "Europe" came mostly, perhaps, from Bach, Brahms, Balzac, Debussy, Nietzsche, Poe, and other art which bore un-American implications. It certainly made me more comfortable with Emerson than I would have been without it. Of the three of us, only Fred was convinced that it was not only possible but important to create a poetry that was distinctly (I'm tempted to say, pristinely) American in both idiom and outlook. Dick and I agreed that Americanism was a flavor and could be tincted into poetry as into other things, but we couldn't see it as a virtue in itself; there were other flavors, and some people preferred orange.

The situation and operation of the press was this. Dick supported it, and himself, by working for various small printers. He learned to play a Chandler & Price as adroitly as Horowitz played the piano. Early on, one proprietor allowed him to use the shop for his own purposes, *gratis*, after closing time. That way, the press got started without the burden of a large initial expenditure. (Dick's money was more in the family background than in his own bank account.) We brought out magazine issues, chapbooks, and hardcover volumes irregularly—whenever Dick could, almost, afford to.

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A gifted (and self-taught) layout artist with a knowledge of every typeface and laid text ever marketed, he designed most of the books and magazine issues himself. No one could quarrel with the results: Instead of pouring his life down the drain of TV and computer screens, he created paper artifacts, now collectible, of permanent appeal. In the early 1950's, a more lucrative position in public relations (at Columbus Coated Fabrics) permitted him to buy a letterpress; from then on, the printing was done in his Arlington apartment. Dick's expenses increased when, a short time after I came aboard, he married Miriam Chapman of Atlanta, but all along he was being partly subsidized by his mother, a large, square, somberly evangelical woman, happily seldom seen, who disapproved of art, larks, and geese, golden or otherwise.

As was only fitting, Dick himself kept the accounts of the press and had the last word on all decisions. Fred, Miriam, and I sometimes assisted in print runs, hardcover binding, and other manufacture. Meetings were by invitation from the amiable autocrat; they occurred at irregular intervals and were usually more pleasure than business. The main entertainment, aside from spirited conversation, was a seemingly unlimited supply of Carling's Black Label. Sometimes there were guests: Professor Hans Gottschalk of Ohio State, a stodgy and unopened but openable fellow who, apparently because of his fondness for the Arlington soirées, came closer and closer to joining the human race; Horace Schwartz, radio announcer (WOSU) and Marxist musician enamored of decidedly un-Marxist music; Cleveland poet Stanley Rosen, who later wrote an illuminating book on nihilism; Christopher Maclaine fresh—or, rather, jaded—from California. Hating all passivity and let-down, Dick encouraged everyone to be bright, anecdotal, jocularly bold. At 1927 Northwest Boulevard, I never heard a mean or even a vulgar sentiment. The rule of hilarity combined with the complete absence of slovenly behavior and four-letter cacophonies was a freedom that has quite possibly never been experienced subsequently in any freewheeling get-together where adult beverages were served.

Herr Doktor Eckman, as I frequently hailed him, was more beautifully independent than Dick. Fred required no hangers-on, no camp followers. He often made negative judgments on the guests and on the writers and editors with whom Dick carried on what was more often than not a voluminous correspondence. Realizing early that my reactions would generally be much the same as his own, Fred often conveyed his witty critiques in that priceless possession of antisocial intelligence, the whisper. The man was a natural moralist, privately and amusedly suspecting most motives, including his own; but ready to feed, clothe, shelter, and console every drone, drudge, scoundrel, and malingerer in sight. Even Emerson, sophisticated and self-contained, was disarmed by Fred's ability to pass the death sentence and yet welcome the sinner. Scholarly consultant, clear-sighted and supremely sane advisor, Fred was even more important as the paradigm of unself-serious but sensitive moral life. At all points, he was a steadying influence, giving me something to want to grow toward, and giving ambitious, unretiring Emerson salutary pause. It may be only a coincidence, but it fits the story well, that Dick began to go to pieces not long after Fred went off—in the early 50's—to a teaching post in West Virginia. In 1954, Dick abruptly dropped the *Goose* and all of us that went with it. Divorce, flight to California with another woman, silence year after year. Fred resented that abandonment more than I did: Dick had never made any personal commitment to stripling me, and the *Goose* was only one, and not the most important, adventure that helped me discover what sort of person I seemed to be.

Broken by the death of his second wife, Juanita, Dick departed from these rounds of seasons too soon, in circumstances more painful than anyone deserves. The years made Fred Eckman ever kinder and more sensibly hilarious. Me, they made ever more grateful for his existence. A nation of loners and self-centered competitors, America has never been long on writers willing to sacrifice even their art, when necessary, for the continuity and deepening growth of friendship. For some time to come, a good many people will pay homage to the Herr Doktor for what he could teach them about the structures and implications of literary texts. For others, perhaps needier and of humbler expectation, he'll remain just the one who never, on any condition, let you down. He walked in the clean, high places and always wanted you there with him.

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HISTORY

Lies, Damned Lies, and Fossils

by Philip Jenkins

Not for the first time in recent years, American history is the subject of a ferocious political controversy, which ultimately grows out of the national obsession with race. What is new about this particular battle is the chronological setting: We are not dealing here with the New Deal, with Reconstruction, or the slave trade, but with a period inconceivably distant, before there was a United States; indeed, long before human beings had dreamed of building pyramids or ziggurats. Recent archaeological discoveries have thrown doubt upon everything we thought we knew about human origins in the New World, blowing large holes in the scientific orthodoxy of the last few decades. It is not surprising to find the new facts challenged by a rearguard of traditionally minded scholars, whose whole careers were invested in an older model, but what is alarming is that the federal government and even its Armed Forces have become utterly committed to yesterday's orthodoxy, to the extent of resorting to chicanery and intimidation: In short, the Clinton administration has decided to declare war on American archaeology. Even more repugnant, it is doing so in pursuit of doctrines of racial purity. How exactly did we get into such a moral and intellectual quagmire?

To understand this mess, we need to appreciate the traditional view of how human beings reached the Americas. From the 1920's, the standard view was that the New World had no human population before about 15,000 years ago, when hunters following big game trekked across the land bridge which then united Siberia and Alaska. (The date was fixed because that passage had been closed by ice for many millennia beforehand.) They rapidly spread across the continent, leaving as traces stone spearheads of the sort first discovered at Clovis, New Mexico. Other population waves came in over the following millennia, but always over the land bridge, so

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that all Indian populations in the Americas, north and south, ultimately derived from these Siberian migrants.

The Clovis theory of New World settlement worked magnificently so long as the amount of contrary evidence was small enough to be controlled and, above all, no material evidence of earlier settlement appeared. Partly, this was achieved by an unconscious conspiracy: Archaeologists now freely admit that when they reached Clovis levels at a particular site, they simply stopped digging, because they knew in their hearts that nothing else could be there. Unfortunately, there almost certainly was older material which was simply ignored. In the last decade or two, an intellectual revolution has ensued, which indicates, first, that people have been in the Americas for much longer than we had hitherto thought: probably for 30,000 or 40,000 years, and possibly for 50,000 or 60,000. Second, the remains of these ancient people are, frankly, in the wrong places. If they were all Siberian newcomers, it is odd that their ancient remains should be turning up more in South America than in the north, as much in the eastern half of the United States as in the west.

Trying to explain these inconvenient facts, scholars are now proposing an array of theories which, had they been proposed 20 years ago, would have been as respectable as the idea that our ancestors all landed in UFOs as part of a high-school science project on Alpha Centauri. If we find people here before 15,000 years ago, we can no longer assume a land bridge route and must entertain the idea that the first Americans came by boat, probably cruising along the coasts, and perhaps in quest of marine mammals. Instead of Siberians, they would have been more akin to the people we now find in various parts of East Asia and Polynesia or—and this is a deeply controversial idea—in Western Europe. One explosive theory suggests that the first Americans came from what is now Spain and France, bearing with them the kind of "Solutrean" culture which then prevailed in those regions. In this model, settlers would have coasted along the frozen shores of the North Atlantic via Iceland and Greenland, entering the New World through Labrador. Obviously, the people we call "Indians" appeared at some point, but either they were one group among many, or else they were late arrivals. Gradually, they displaced or (more likely) assimilated the older populations, whom we might call the true "Native" Americans.

Contributing to the demolition of the Clovis model is a small but quite devastating assemblage of anthropological evidence, in the form of ancient skeletons. The most celebrated is the fairly complete skeleton of a man found at Kennewick, Washington, in 1996 and dated to around 9,000 years before the present, but other important examples include the astonishing Spirit Cave mummy in Utah, which seems to have had brownish-red hair. None of the most ancient human remains in the Americas even vaguely fits a Siberian pattern, nor do any show a resemblance to American Indians. The oldest humans found in the Americas were characterized by long skulls and narrow faces.

At this point, we can see why the new discoveries are so troubling to American Indians, and hence to American theories of race. For Indians, the sense that they have always been here is fundamental to their whole belief system, and, often, religious values: White Americans pay homage to this idea when we use the term "Native Americans." In some sense, Indians obviously have occupied the Americas far longer than the descendants of the British or Germans or Italians, but some Indian advocates take this "native" idea to unconscionable extremes. A whole school of "Native Creationism" holds that Indian creation myths are literally correct in asserting that particular tribes really did originate in the areas of North America which they claimed, and that scientific stories of geological change and human evolution are just another white man's lie (though why the white man would have invented ancestral origins in Africa remains unclear). The best-known advocate of this radical position is Vine DeLoria, Jr., author of a silly farrago of misinformation and special pleading entitled *Red Earth, White Lies* (1995). A milder form of the creationist idea holds that particular tribes have "always been" more or less where they first appear in the historical record, and that they have "always" venerated particular mountains, rivers, or natural features in that location. This autochthonous claim is even made by tribes that we know perfectly well moved to their present location relatively recently: The Navajo arrived in their southwestern homeland around the time that Columbus was setting sail, while the Lakota/Sioux probably had not even seen the Black Hills of Dakota before the 19th century. Nevertheless, modern activists hold that the respective sacred landscapes really have belonged to those tribes since time immemorial, and anyone who claims to the contrary is a damned Indian-hater. We can imagine the distress with which Indians regard claims that their ancestors were relatively late arrivals who undertook their own particular kind of ancient ethnic cleansing, and perhaps even displaced European predecessors.

Indian rhetoric that "we have always been here" has a strong appeal not just for the usual liberal constituency, suffused in *Dances With Wolves* sentimentality, but also for any impartial student of American history who can appreciate that Indians frequently have been treated very, very badly by white newcomers, sometimes to the point of diabolical savagery. A substantial feeling of white guilt is understandable, and it has found expression in federal laws designed to prevent a repetition of past atrocities. The problem is that some of these well-intentioned laws now create a critical conflict between the soundly attested findings of objective science and what we can only call archaeological correctness.

The most important measure in this regard is the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, which was designed to prevent the kind of ghoulish exploitation of Indian skeletons which had been commonplace in earlier decades. Under the law, Indian bones which had long been gathering dust in various museums were to be restored to their tribes of origin, and special obligations were laid upon archaeologists who might come upon such remains. Any "Native American cultural items" found on federal land were to be restored to "the lineal descendants of the Native American," or, where that could not be determined, to the tribe on whose land these remains were found. In cases of controversy, a claim could be staked by "the Indian tribe that is recognized as aboriginally occupying the area in which the objects were discovered." The law thus institutionalizes not just one but a whole series of scholarly orthodoxies which were already shaky in 1990 and have now all but disintegrated: namely, that any pre-Columbian material remains are by definition American Indian; and, moreover, that particular tribes are "aboriginal," that they have been in that precise area since time immemorial (or,

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as some would say, since the Creation).

The effect on the study of ancient origins has been catastrophic. Indian activists can protest all they like at scholarly conferences proposing new theories of early American settlement, but with NAGPRA behind them, they can directly affect—or rather, sabotage—the course of scientific discovery. The effect of NAGPRA is evident from a series of cases in which scientists have been prevented from examining ancient bones which clearly manifest non-Indian features; in some cases, remains have been handed over to local tribes for clandestine reburial in places where they will never again be polluted by the hands of white scholars. Such concealment has been the fate of crucial remains from Minnesota, while the skeleton of the 11,000-year-old Buhl Woman from Idaho was promptly handed over to the Shoshone-Bannock tribe and is, in effect, lost forever to science. The law has forbidden proper investigation of the Spirit Cave mummy: The local Paiute tribe is demanding that body, too.

The present scholarly battleground is the Kennewick skeleton, about which much has already been learned, but the principal finding is that (like the Buhl and Spirit Cave skeletons) it represents a thoroughly non-Indian body type. Despite early reports that the skull was European in nature, the best evidence now suggests Polynesian parallels. Other obvious avenues of research suggest themselves, particularly DNA testing, but the time and opportunity for study is strictly limited because of federal law. The skeleton is pre-Columbian; therefore, it is Indian; therefore, it belongs to the tribe that has "always" occupied that region—or at least, that has been there in historic times. Despite all evidence to the contrary, if Kennewick Man died on what eventually became lands of a particular tribe, he must have been an ancestor of that tribe.

The Kennewick saga is depressing in the extreme. Within weeks of the skeleton's discovery, it was in the custody of the Army Corps of Engineers, which made it clear that, as in all such cases, it was going to return the bones forthwith to its proper and natural owners—the neighboring Indian tribes. The Corps was prevented only by the legal intervention of archaeologists, supported by a quirky body of Nordic racial theorists called the Asatru Folk Assembly, who claimed Kennewick Man as a relative. Meanwhile, intimidated by NAGPRA, neither the Corps nor the Department of the Interior did anything with the bones: God forbid they should undertake any kind of research.

The battle over "Mr. Kennewick" has since worked its way through the courts and the federal bureaucracy; at every stage, officialdom has made no secret of its desire to give the bones back to their putative Indian owners. In the process, the U.S. Army has pulled such amazing stunts as burying the site with dirt and boulders and planting trees over the area, in effect wantonly destroying a crucial archaeological monument and making it impossible to deduce anything about the skeleton's context. Supposedly, it was operating in response to "concern" from the White House, which normally does not express such passion about technical disputes in the realm of archaeology. Other portions of the skeleton have already been "lost," which, in terms of its historical importance, is akin to "misplacing" a copy of the Declaration of Independence. At the start of this year, the Justice Department determined that Kennewick Man was a Native American, on the grounds of his age: The bones were 9,000 years old, a date which somehow "eliminated theories" that he could be either Asian or European. Since only Indians were here at that point, the bones were Indian, Q.E.D. At the time of this writing, the disposal of the bones remains unclear, but we should expect the worst. We can also wonder whether federal authorities will permit any future embarrassments of this sort, so that comparable finds over the next few years are likely to be, literally and figuratively, buried immediately.

Nobody is suggesting a return to the days when Indian remains were displayed for paying customers to the horror of local Indian tribes, who rightly saw such acts as desecration. But for all its good intentions, NAGPRA has become a deeply dangerous law, a warrant for obscurantism and vandalism—in short, a public scandal. If even the Kennewick disaster does not force us to change the law, we might as well give up any hope for studying the archaeology of the Americas and just do what the federal government does: rely uncritically on Indian creation myths.

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PHILOSOPHY

The Anti-Philosophy of Richard Rorty

by Paul R. Scholle

On the bookstore magazine rack were several copies of *Dissent*. The cover piqued my interest because it advertised an article by Richard Rorty, an academic philosopher and a professor of mine at Princeton in 1977.

Rorty's contribution to *Dissent*, part of a multi-author retrospective on the impeachment of President Clinton appearing in the Spring 1999 edition, is entitled "Saved From Hypocrisy." Its thesis is that the public indifference to the President's sex life has had the beneficial effect of hurting the political fortunes of social-issue conservatives ("the hypocrites of the Christian Right"). Now, he writes, the only impediment to a just and compassionate society are the economic conservatives ("greedheads") who will henceforth gain ascendancy in the Republican Party. But the "greedheads," at least, are free from hypocrisy: "[T]hey are not trying to reduce politics to a battle between the pure and the impure."

It took grit to read Rorty's stream of invective against socially conservative Republicans (among whom I count myself). But even more difficult to stomach was the spectacle of a "philosopher" of apparently powerful intellect and wit stooping to the grossest level of leftist *ad hominem*.

Two decades ago at Princeton, Rorty was held in high esteem for his intelligence and self-effacing humor. A friend told me that I should sign up for Rorty's class because he was both smart and funny. Indeed, his great popularity as a lecturer owed much to his ability to keep students amused for the better part of 50 minutes.

Like most of his students, I did find him amusing. While suffering from mononucleosis and strep throat, I even went AWOL from the campus infirmary so I would not miss his final lecture of the term. A typical college freshman, I was struggling with profound questions of belief. Naively, perhaps, I had a habit of signing up for philosophy and religion courses in the search for Truth. As Pro-

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fessor Rorty's class was supposed to be a survey of philosophy, I supposed I might find some truth mixed in with the mirth. My hope was disappointed, for the course was really nothing more than an introduction to skepticism—not only about religious belief, but about the very existence of reason and truth. Advertised as "philosophy," it was, in fact, anti-philosophy.

As a student, I was in no position to challenge the prevailing beliefs of those who posed as teachers. And, like most students, I had just enough *savoir faire* to know that opposing what later became known as "political correctness" amounted to academic suicide. So, for the most part, I kept my own counsel.

But even as an artless undergraduate, I had a half-articulated idea that Rorty's deconstructionism must necessarily self-destruct. For one cannot make a reasoned argument (that is, an argument calculated to convince anyone else) that does not posit reason as its standard. There must be some irreducible truth upon which we can agree, before we can even begin to have the kind of public discourse about ideas that philosophy entails.

Rorty's aim, however, was to demolish the very concept of truth. In doing so, he also destroyed his own ability to construct a cogent argument. Cogency entails supporting one's major point by establishing the truth—or at least the plausibility—of one's subsidiary points. Rorty utterly fails to do this. In fact, he shows himself to be a serial question-beggar.

To be convinced that the public was right to reject the supposed hypocrisy of the Christian Right, one must first hold a series of supporting beliefs. One must believe that members of the Christian Right do not act according to their stated beliefs, that the public knows it, and that the public decided to punish them for such hypocrisy. More fundamentally, one must presume that the entire impeachment was about illicit sex rather than the obstruction of the judicial process. And one must disregard completely the roles that the media and presidential politics played in the unfolding of events. For all these reasons, Rorty's thesis that the public is punishing the "religious right" for its hypocritical attacks on Clinton is simplistic in the extreme. And it is not even very original, having been adopted long ago by most middle-brow pundits.

The sloppiness of Rorty's argument, unbecoming a philosopher, is not so surprising coming from a person with an *a priori* commitment to liberal political beliefs. For the true object of Rorty's *Dissent* article is not to meditate on the "larger meaning" of the impeachment, but to vilify his political adversaries and gloat over their defeat.

The article illustrates and confirms a larger truth about academic "liberals," the group of "*New Yorker*-reading academics" in which Rorty includes himself. In an attempt to destroy the institutions they hate (tradition, morality, public virtue), they seek to destroy the very foundations (God, reason, truth) of those institutions. But, in doing so, the liberals hurt their own cause. Having destroyed objective truth, they have destroyed the only basis on which to engage in public discourse with people who do not already share their conclusions. Discourse descends to the level of pure assertion, unsupported by any reasoning. From there, it descends even further, into unadulterated ridicule of one's adversaries—ridicule which has ceased to be funny because it merely presumes the conclusion that one's enemies are laughable.

When scorners of God and reason wield political power, they are much to be feared. They are apt to do just as they please, precisely because they believe that there is no ultimate power to restrain them. Indeed, in our national political life, those who are a law unto themselves now appear to hold sway. Even in the sphere of life we share beyond the narrow realm of elective politics, the "liberals" have attempted to impose their nihilism—by force if necessary—on our culture.

Fortunately, Richard Rorty's solipsistic musings pose no grave threat to the future of mankind. His *Dissent* audience most probably consists of people who already agree with him. It is not likely to grow, because he is incapable of making a reasoned argument from shared beliefs; rather, he has consigned himself to recycling premises dressed up to look like conclusions. And he is no longer funny, at least to grown-ups.

Paul R. Scholle, a First Amendment lawyer, writes from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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EDUCATION

Public Schools: The Medium Is the Message

by William H. Peterson

The shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, are still reverberating—accentuating some of the enormous problems with public education.

American high schools are plagued with low academic standards, moral relativism, political correctness, student apathy, and social permissiveness. All of this has led to a deterioration in students' commitment to learning, their sense of direction, even their willingness to succeed.

The root cause of these problems may be endemic in the structure of public schooling itself. If the public school is the "medium," then its message is this: First, an insistence on compulsory attendance laws that involve a basic denial of parental and student choice and consent by making use of monopoly and coercion. Second, a push for compulsory public funding at the expense of local and, worse, parental control. Third, a toleration and support of moral relativism or "permissiveness."

Thus does government schooling, a $300-billion-a-year Leviathan, lumber on, breeding academic lethargy and confusion along with student frustration and aggression. Compare this to private and parochial schools, all based on choice and consent and on the teaching, for the most part, of positive values. In private schools, rage is rare and academic discipline and excellence are common. Can you imagine two students at, say, a St. Joseph's Academy talking up "big trouble at school next week"?

Parental and student consent—its presence or absence—is crucial. John Stuart Mill saw schools "on the voluntary principle" as naturally involving individual consent and wholehearted participation. The anticompetitive principle that public schools are based on—funded through taxes as they are—can creep into the classroom, where a statist or generally pro-government view can color the

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teaching. Wasn't Mill on to something when he said: "A general state education is a mere contrivance for molding people to be exactly like one another. . . . It establishes a despotism over the mind"?

So if monopoly of public funding and denial of choice and consent sum up America's public school impasse, what should we do?

One short-term answer is just to throw more money at the whole school problem. In 1999, congressional Republicans, stung by President Clinton's initiative calling for 100,000 new teachers and smaller classes, sought a $40 billion increase in federal education spending over the next five years. Said Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, fresh from a Republican caucus: "We want to get into helping the states." Helping the states—or helping the students? Or, more likely, helping the GOP politically? In any event, is more money really the answer?

According to an American Legislative Exchange Council study in 1998 on schooling costs, state by state, New Jersey led the nation in the 1996-97 school year, spending an average of $10,975 per student. Yet it ranked 39th among states in average SAT scores in 1998. Washington, D.C., had the nation's second-highest per student expenses ($10,384), and it ranked 50th in average SAT scores.

At the same time, Minnesota spent much less, averaging $6,345 per student, but ranked third in average SAT scores. Iowa did better yet, spending an average of $6,056 per student, and coming in first on SAT scores.

A Cato Institute study put average tuition for all K-12 private schools, except parochial, in the 1994-95 school year at $3,116—less than half of the $6,857 cost per pupil in the average public school. Yet private schools score higher SAT scores—granted, with smaller, more selected student bodies, including those with inner-city schoolchildren. Even with that caveat, however, any positive correlation between public school spending and public school results is weak to nonexistent.

A better—if still short-term—answer to America's school problem would be private scholarships such as those established by Wall Street financier Theodore J. Forstmann and John Walton of the Wal-Mart family. In 1998-99, the Forstmann-Walton team raised $170 million for a scholarship fund. Forstmann said a flood of 1.2 million applications—that's almost one for every 50 American schoolchildren—was "a cry from the heart" for access to the scant 40,000 computer-allocated scholarship slots at private and parochial schools. He noted that, even though the means-tested applicants' families had low incomes, they were still willing to pass up "free" public education and pay up to $1,000 a year.

But such scholarships, though welcome, are limited tools to promote widespread consent, renew traditional values, and encourage parent-student-teacher cooperation and enthusiasm.

The only true solution is far more radical. Since the central problems of public schooling are due to its negation of much parental and student choice through compulsory attendance laws and the monopoly of public funding without (by and large) taxpayer consent, we must break that compulsion and monopoly. For if separation of church and state makes sense—and I believe it does—then why not face the challenge of separation of school and state?

Ludwig von Mises said it well in his 1929 book *Liberalism*:

> The school is a political prize of the highest importance. It cannot be deprived of its political character as long as it remains a public and compulsory institution. There is, in fact, only one solution: the state, the laws, must not in any way concern themselves with schooling or education. Public funds must not be used for such purposes. The rearing and instruction of youth must be left entirely to parents and to private associations and institutions.

William H. Peterson is an adjunct scholar at the Heritage Foundation and the Distinguished Lundy Emeritus Professor of Business Philosophy at Campbell University in North Carolina.

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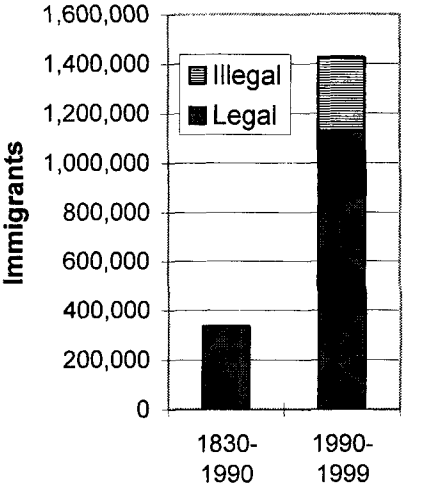

Source: INS

The big losers are wage earners (wages have been depressed for almost 30 years), taxpayers (cost to local communities for each immigrant ranges from $13,000 to $23,000 annually), and future generations of Americans (who wants to live in cities as densely populated as Tokyo, Hong Kong or Mexico City?)

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FILM

Making War

by Clyde Wilson

Wake Island (1942)

Directed by John Farrow
B&W, 88 Minutes

Go Tell the Spartans (1978)

Directed by Ted Post
Color, 114 Minutes

Saigon: Year of the Cat (1983)

Directed by Stephen Frears
Color, 106 Minutes

Americans learn their wars primarily through the movies. Who, except for the few who were actually there, can imagine World War II without thinking of John Wayne? The popular medium, gives us a way to digest what would otherwise be too terrible to contemplate, to absorb it into the national psyche.

Generally speaking, British World War II movies are much better than American. The British leave out the silly common-man comic relief touches and excessive firefights that Americans want and concentrate on the experience and character of men at war. An exception, and possibly the best American film to come out of the war, is *Wake Island*. *Wake Island* tells the story of a few hundred American Marines and construction workers who were caught on the barren Pacific atoll of Wake after Pearl Harbor. Without any hope of relief, they fight skillfully and to the last against overwhelming Japanese sea, land, and air forces.

The combat is well rendered, but the emphasis is on the characters—the Marine commander (Brian Dunleavy) who has left a motherless young daughter in Hawaii; common Marines like the inevitable William Bendix and a very young Robert Preston; the engineers and construction men who decline a chance to escape; a handful of pilots (including Macdonald Carey) who sacrifice themselves against impossible odds.

It is a propaganda film, and a very good one. It shows Americans coming together to sacrifice their lives for their country. For their country: because it is, under the circumstances, the right thing to do. There is not a word about saving the world for democracy, nor a single glowing tribute to Eleanor Roosevelt's wonderful plans for postwar reconstruction; not even much about Mother, Apple Pie, and The Girl I Left Behind. Instead there is something approaching the high mode of Western epic—courageously facing unavoidable fate.

The Marine leader mentions (attention, Ruth Bader Ginsburg!) that he is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute—to which the leader of the construction crew (Walter Abel) replies that he is a Notre Dame man himself. Imagine that. Racist, sexist VMI! Reactionary Notre Dame! Both in a film designed to arouse American patriotism. Someone must have known how to appeal to Americans at a deeper level than the average studio executive in Hollywood could aim at, even then—much less today. The most memorable scene in the film is the nighttime burial of casualties, with crosses prominently displayed and the reading of prayers. There are no atheists in the foxholes, one Marine comments. Really. *Wake Island* will remind you of what our country once was and probably will never be again.

I doubt if we will ever see a good film about the Gulf War, because the whole thing was too silly to make good drama. There have been several unsuccessful attempts at the Grenada invasion, including Clint Eastwood's worst film, *Heartbreak Ridge*, which was almost as embarrassing as John Wayne's *The Green Berets*. And we certainly have not come to grips with that strange episode in American history known as the Vietnam War.

The Hollywood treatment so far certainly won't do. The accepted wisdom is that the Oliver Stone and Francis Ford Coppola productions, *Platoon* and *Apocalypse Now!*, told the story for us. But in retrospect, these films appear hysterical creations of the alienated. They tell us little about war and nothing about the American experience. The makers of these films hate quotidian America, and their hatred both predates and postdates the war. Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* is a partial exception, since the characters bear some resemblance to actual Americans.

Two films, largely overlooked, do come to grips with the Vietnam War in a way that can reconcile us to the past and teach us a few lessons for the future. *Go Tell the Spartans* and *Saigon: Year of the Cat* frame the war perfectly. The first tells of the beginning of the American involvement; the second, of the end. Both portray the tragedy of the time with insight and without hysteria.

Go Tell the Spartans casts Burt Lancaster as a tough regular army officer in the early days of American "advisors." The title of the film is found carved over the gate of a French cemetery near an outpost that Lancaster and his motley crew are left to defend. The Americans should learn something from this, but they don't. Moral ambiguities abound. What if the nice young girl is really, as the South Vietnamese liaison says, a Vietcong who will slit your throat at the first opportunity? The arrogance and ignorance of the brass come through—the Great Society bureaucracy abroad. We can hardly have a better picture of the idiocy of the McNamara war machine: An electronic map supposedly shows, by colored lights, where the enemy activity is most intense. We come away knowing that, at the beginning, the end was already ordained.

Saigon: Year of the Cat was panned by reviewers. I think I know why: Its portrayal of the American establishment, especially the Saigon ambassador (well played by E.G. Marshall), is too close to the truth of intellectual and moral failure. Frederick Forrest is a CIA operative who is unable to convince his superiors that "Vietnamization" has failed and that North Vietnam is on the verge of a final push. Judi Dench is an English bank manager who provides a point of view of sane detachment from which to witness the unfolding collapse. The last American departure is portrayed vividly, as is something almost never mentioned in America: the shameful abandonment of allies to their enemies.

These two works of cinematic art, if pondered, might provide us a way of thinking about that strange interlude that may help us restrain our messianic leaders on some other bloody occasion.

Clyde Wilson is a professor of American history at the University of South Carolina.

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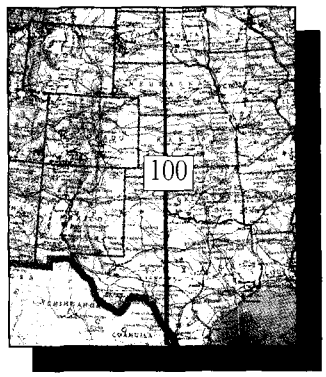
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Having It All



You could say liberalism is about squaring the circle, if it weren't for the fact that even liberals don't really expect to accomplish this feat: They aim at creating the impression they can effect the impossible, and lying afterward about their success in having done it. In between comes an impressive array or sequence of legislative and bureaucratic initiatives—fudging and futile, as complicated as they are incomprehensible, boring beyond the limits of public attention—whose purpose is to convince the voters, the press, even the perpetrating politicians themselves, that Something Is Being Done and A Solution Is in Sight. Months, occasionally a few years, go by before a) everyone has forgotten the crisis, or b) the politicians and their media apologists declare the victory of liberal ingenuity over the laws of mankind, and of nature itself. Nature, of course, knows better, while even mankind can be fooled only in the short run (depending on your understanding of the word "short").

The process is necessarily surrounded by buzzwords, as a range carcass is surrounded by flies. In the old cowtown of Denver, now a city of a couple of million people, the majority of whom seem to be economic refugees from Old Mexico and cultural ones from the Golden State (annually assuming a deeper bronze hue), the loudest buzz being made by the biggest, most aggressive flies from the Republican governor down to the shabbiest environmentalist, the rattiest Democratic ward-heeler, is "smart growth." "Smart growth," like the "smart bomb," represents an attempt at squaring the circle, at having it all: destruction without risk (to the aggressor), action without consequence, choice without sacrifice. Over the past two decades Colorado has doubled its population, most of the growth occurring north and south of the Denver area along the Front Range. The scenery is (or rather was) lovely, the climate ideal (before the L.A. smog was piggybacked in like the chemical version of an alien biological species in the car trunks of arriving Angelenos), the prairie an indefinitely expansive Eden awaiting completion by the travail of developers (until, spreading eastward, Denver butts up against Kansas City the way Los Angeles is projected to bump into Phoenix, Arizona). Americans all want the same thing at the same time (a dependable sign of mass hysteria), and to live in Colorado is a craze lasting already at least 30 years. And everything at once as well: California freeways in addition to Colorado mountains, big-city convenience along with small-town access, West Coast lifestyles in a heart of the American heartland—most importantly, Pacific Rim salaries on an old buffalo pasture and Indian hunting-ground. "Smart growth" is an attempt at having it every which way through land set-asides, easements, restrictions on developers, and so on, without putting the brake on population increase and economic growth: by combining, that is, virtue with greed, a program which reflects almost the whole of the national political, social, and economic agenda at the start of the third millennium.

The *Denver Post*, a liberal newspaper calling itself "The Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire," works hard to live up to its billing, boosting city and state with the pep and zip of the *Zenith Advocate-Times*. The *Post's* Sunday edition is really a giant promotional kit aimed at selling off Colorado to the highest bidder. The editors are alarmed by what you might call "stupid growth," but when it comes to corporations relocating in Denver, too much is never enough. They're concerned about loss of wilderness in areas surrounding Colorado's ski resorts, but during the winter months give Vail, Aspen, Copper Mountain, and Telluride what amounts to free publicity in the interest of pumping up these destructive behemoths to even greater size. The Immigration and Naturalization Service announces its intention of cracking down on illegal immigrants in Colorado, and they protest that the ski industry requires these honest, hard-working people who take jobs Americans won't do, and that the INS ought to be working to ensure their civil and economic rights instead. The Vail city council passes a resolution calling upon Congress to enact legislation to stabilize population growth in the United States, and the *Post's* editorial policy is "no comment."

Colorado's largely Republican congressional delegation and its state legislature have been supportive of bills in Congress aimed at establishing new national monuments, most of them in the West, and at upgrading the present Sand Dunes National Monument near Alamosa to the status of a national park. When President Clinton in 1996 created the Escalante-Grand Staircase National Monument in Utah by executive order and in January 2000 invoked the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate a million acres in Arizona the "Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument," Republican lawmakers were outraged. Colorado Republicans, though, have a special consideration these days: their state's suburbs which, in addition to being largely Republican, are populated by outdoor recreationists driving $40,000 four-wheel-drive vehicles. If this development should in time be repeated in other of the Western states, an eventual realignment in environmental politics could occur as environmentalism rediscovers its WASPish, upper-middle-class roots in the conservation ethic of Republican progressivism early in the 1900's—which God forbid.

Peter Huber, a senior fellow at the neoconservative Manhattan Institute, makes the case in his recently published book, *Hard Green: Saving the Environment from the Environmentalists, A Conservative Manifesto,* for a "conservative" brand of environmentalism. "[T]o conserve wilderness legacies and to expand them is not to abandon conservative principle," he argues, "it is to affirm it." Well and good. Reading further, however, one

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discovers that Huber's conservatism is of the cornucopian—i.e., having-it-all—variety, a secular version of Christianity-without-the-Cross. Indeed, it is largely a restatement of the smelly intellectual corpus of the late Julian Simon, which Huber has ill-advisedly sought to resurrect. Human beings are not the problem, Huber insists, they're the solution; wealth is the most effective birth-control device: national populations decline with increased prosperity. "There is no inherent scarcity of food, fuel, metal, mineral or space to bury our trash": only of wilderness and the wildlife that inhabits wilderness, which "conservatives" should seek to preserve through the conservation of wetlands and forests. As the nation matures, Huber suggests, it wishes to conserve "more law, more history, more freedom and more public land, too. And so we should, political conservatives especially. This is the most conservative conviction we can embrace." Linda Chavez, at the start of a newspaper column devoted to Huber and his book, noted that she feels nervous when Bill Clinton does something she approves of (in the present case, granting protected status to the Grand Canyon tract). Similarly, I'm suspicious of any conservationist plan endorsed by Linda Chavez, founder and spiritual leader of the United Immigrationist Church.

A few days past New Year's, the Census Bureau heralded the third millennium with the announcement that it is projecting the population of the United States at 571 million people by the year 2100. This grim news was for the most part ignored by the media, except for encouraging reflections that, even with 571 million inhabitants, the United States would have a lower population density than Germany has today (as if that country were a third waterless desert and another third truck garden and bread basket to much of the world). For the next couple of weeks I scanned the press for comment from the Sierra Club but found nothing—as might be expected from a protectionist organization whose official response to massive population increase produced by immigration is to demand that native Americans produce fewer offspring as a balance for the fertility of non-native citizens and illegal immigrants.

The refusal by the Sierra Club to recognize the greatest existing threat to the cause it was founded to promote indicates the extent of the Terror sustained by the organs of official opinion in this country and the power underlying the conspiracy of silence on immigration, as on other "sensitive" issues. Sierra Club officials, of all people, ought to be alert to the likely eventual fate awaiting large birds with pompom bodies, outsized padded feet, stick legs, and serpentine necks who react to proximate danger by sticking their heads in the sand. Historically, the conservationist movement and the environmentalist one that succeeded it have been, like democratic institutions arising from traditional British liberties, culturally specific phenomena. Do Mexico, Nicaragua, Kenya, Ghana, Thailand, China, the Koreas, Vietnam, Haiti, Jamaica, Russia—to name only a few of the countries sending immigrants in substantial numbers to the United States—have their own equivalent of the Sierra Club? Have they passed any vast body of environmental law onto their statute books? (Do they have anything properly describable as statute books, as British law understands them, or enjoy even the rule of law itself?) Immigrationists seem to believe America has its own unique atmosphere, a gaseous bubble enclosing the North American continent, which, processed through the lungs of aliens, produces the red blood cells specific to 100-Percent Americans. Of course, anyone who knows anything about human nature, history, and politics, or even reads the newspapers intelligently, knows the Bubble Effect to be mere superstition, like the alchemical transformation of dross into gold and other medievalist beliefs rational progressivists deride. It's about as reasonable to expect that the America of 2100 in which white European-Americans constitute 52 percent of the population (20 percent less than today) will have a commitment to wilderness preservation as to imagine it will be devoted to maintaining present affirmative-action law (especially in defense of the coming white minority). Huber himself admits that wilderness (which I prefer to think of simply as open, humanly undeveloped space) is in scarce supply. Is it likely that a hundred years from now, with the population of the United States more than doubled, that supply will not have dwindled considerably? The answer, for those who believe in the possibility of having it all, is Yes.

Which, in America, is everybody who is anybody. The only message to arise from the current political season is that on EVERY SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC ISSUE, whether domestic or international, the candidates of the two major parties (and even some of the minor ones) are in fundamental agreement. And the basis of this consensus, or unanimity, is having it all: autonomy and regulation, diversity and identity, multiculturalism and Americanism, imperialism and a volunteer army, military adventurism and no casualties, immigration and wilderness, growth and open space, private property and government lockups, freedom of expression and sensitivity training, affirmative action and a color-blind society, lower taxes and Social Security, overvaluation and zero inflation, tobacco subsidies and tobacco penalties, French and no tears, morality and unrestraint, sadistic entertainment and benign children, corrupt politicians and election reform, the Constitution and the Supreme Court, abortion and the blessings of God. Gee—ain't America grand?

Recently, Alan Greenspan offered a no-so-veiled hint to the congressional and executive branches of the federal government when he observed in a speech to the Economic Club of New York City that the tight labor market virtually guarantees eventual inflationary pressures—unless the country makes the decision to import labor. . . . Linda Chavez, the Manhattan Institute, and other familiar parties must have been gratified, but what does the Sierra Club really think of the idea? The answer is, like most of the rest of brain-dead America, it doesn't really THINK at all.

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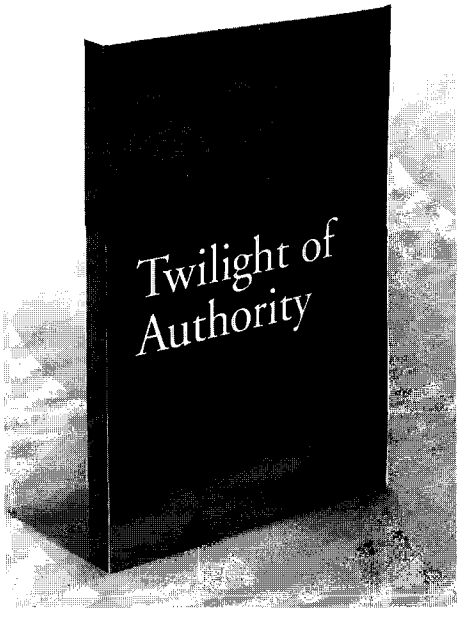
TWILIGHT OF AUTHORITY

By Robert Nisbet
Foreword by Robert G. Perrin



We had thought, or our forefathers had, that modern liberal democracy would be spared the kind of erosion and decay that both Plato and Aristotle declared endemic in all forms of state. Now we are not so sure." So wrote Robert Nisbet in the first edition of ***Twilight of Authority***, published by Oxford University Press in 1975, shortly after the resignation of President Richard Nixon revealed what Nisbet called "only the most extreme and corrupt manifestation of a democratic royalism that has roots in several preceding administrations." Nisbet argues that the political community in the West has broken down after two centuries of ascendancy. He believes that the West has entered "a twilight age" that will be characterized by political and cultural crises similar to those that preceded the fall of Rome. He foresees the displacement of traditional, liberal society by centralized, collectivized power—what he terms "the war society," driven by the rising power and expense of a hugely scaled military. "The centralization, and, increasingly, individualization of power is matched in the social and cultural spheres by a combined hedonism and egalitarianism, each in its own way a reflection of the destructive impact of power on the hierarchy that is native to the social bond," he writes. Nisbet offers no prophecy of inevitable decline; rather, he means to call attention to "the problem of finding the means of generating a social order within which the individual can live and derive a spirit of initiative."

Robert Nisbet (1913–1996) was renowned worldwide for his scholarship in the history and philosophy of social and political thought. He taught at Columbia, the University of California at Berkeley, Smith College, and the University of Bologna, and was the author of several major works, including *Social Change and History* and *The Quest for Community*.

Robert G. Perrin is Professor of Sociology at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

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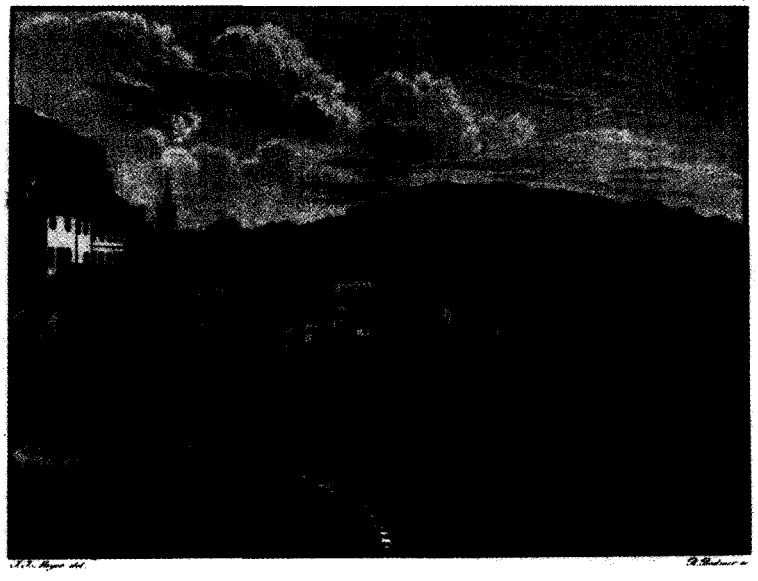

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